



CHRISTIANITY & SECULARISM
A DEBATE
BETWEEN
DR. SEXTON
AND
MR. CHAS. WATTS

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CHRISTIANITY & SECULARISM:

WHICH IS THE BETTER SUITED TO MEET
THE WANTS OF MANKIND?

A WRITTEN DEBATE

BETWEEN THE

REV. GEORGE SEXTON, M.A., LL.D.,

Editor of "The Shield of Faith,"

AND

CHARLES WATTS, ESQ.,

Editor of "The Secular Review."

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PREFACE.

THE following discussion was conducted in writing, the letters appearing, at intervals of a fortnight, in the pages of the *Secular Review*. The two disputants had met in oral debate on the platform several times previously, when the same questions had been dealt with. But it was thought that more justice could be done to the views respectively advocated, by sitting down to write in the calm atmosphere of the Study than by extemporaneous speaking amid the noise, tumult, and excitement that usually prevail at public meetings. The result is now before the reader.

The discussion was conducted during eleven months, the first letter appearing on November 5th, 1880, and the last on October 1st, 1881.

That either disputant has made out the best possible case for the side espoused, is more than he can hope for. He has done his best in the space at his disposal—limited, after all, when the extensive nature of the subjects is taken into consideration.

Each writer has studiously avoided anything like personality and abuse, and has always kept in view the fact that he was discussing principles, not men. That occasionally strong language may have been employed, and warmth of feeling displayed, is possible; but no offensive epithets have been used by one disputant of the other.

That the following pages may be carefully read and studied, is the earnest desire of both.

GEORGE SEXTON.
CHARLES WATTS.

London, November 1st, 1881.

DISCUSSION

ON

SECULARISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

DR. SEXTON'S FIRST LETTER.

IT is difficult to compare Secularism with Christianity, because the latter is a system complete in itself, which the former is not. Christianity is contained in the New Testament, and any one who desires to discover what it is has only to peruse that volume for himself. But where is the system of Secularism to be found? In the writings of Secularists I find no system. There are maxims, statements, precepts, etc., but they do not form a consistent whole. And, moreover, Secularists themselves differ with regard to many points of teaching. Such differences are fatal to the whole thing, because outside of these there exists no authority to which an appeal can be made. How am I to learn what Secularism is when those only who are competent to speak upon the subject are not agreed among themselves? If Mr. Watts announces certain views which he terms Secularism, why should I accept them as such when they are rejected by other Secularistic writers? To give an illustration. Mr. G. J. Holyoake says: "The most attractive explanation offered of religion is that it is the loftiest and crowning speculation which illuminates the field of human duty and the dim path of human destiny" (*Reasoner*, x., p. 304). Is this true, because, if it be, the present discussion is uncalled for, since I agree with every word of it? But both Mr. Watts and Mr. Bradlaugh have written far

differently ; as, in point of fact, Mr. Holyoake himself has in other parts of his works. In another place Mr. Holyoake says : "We labour to establish the coincidence of religion with morality" (*Reasoner*, vi., p. 146). Why, this is just what Christianity does. And, in truth, the coincidence of religion and morality was effected for the first time in the history of the world by Christ. Yet Secularistic teachers are always attacking Christianity. And even in this debate Mr. Watts desires to supplant it by his Secularism. It is impossible, therefore, to learn what Secularism is, and what it seeks to accomplish.

1. What is its theory of the universe ? Is it monistic or dualistic ? If the former, what is the one existence which it recognises ? if the latter, how does it differentiate between the two ? Mr. Bradlaugh tells us that Secularism is Atheism ; Mr. Holyoake thinks differently ; Mr. Watts's views on the subject I am not very clear about. One thing is certain, however, which is, that nearly all Secularists are Atheists, and Mr. Watts is no exception ; for he has published a pamphlet giving reasons for his Atheism. Is Secularism Atheistic, or Theistic, or neither ? If the last, then here is one of its defects ; for it cannot satisfy the intellect in its demand for an explanation of the material universe. All physical things are conditioned, limited, changing, and show themselves to be effects. What and where is the Unconditioned, the Absolute ? There must be such an existence, for it is one of the necessities of thought. The material universe consists of phenomena, which can have no meaning, except in relation to something which exists as their ground. What is this something from a Secularistic standpoint ? The rational mind must and will inquire. Mr. Bradlaugh's one existence is an absurdity and a contradiction. It is taken from Spinoza ; but then that great thinker held that thought was one of its attributes. Mr. Bradlaugh says it has no attributes, in which case it is nothing at all, and hence does not exist. Has Secularism anything to say on this question, or nothing ? If the former, what ? If the latter, then here it breaks down as a system of philosophy, and proves itself intellectually inferior to Christianity.

2. What is its moral code ? Upon this point, too, the greatest possible confusion prevails in the writings of

Secularistic authors. I have just come across the following statement made by Mr. Watts in reply to some person who complains that when a man "throws off the restraints of religion, he plunges into a career of immorality and vice."... "The consistent Secularist not only professes certain principles whose ethical basis is clearly marked, but he consents to regard them as the standard by which his life shall be regulated" (*Secular Review*, October 23rd, p. 266). What are those "principles whose ethical basis is clearly marked"? I have read all the literature of Secularism, and I have failed to discover any "ethical basis" at all. Moral precepts there are, and a great deal of talk about duty; but no foundation on which either the one or the other can rest. A number of apothegms strung together does not constitute a moral system. Some principle must underlie them, and some bond hold them together. In order to be clear here will Mr. Watts tell me—

- (a) What is the source of moral obligation?
- (b) What is the nature of a moral action?
- (c) What are the sanctions of morality?
- (d) What are the incentives to moral conduct?

And when he does so will he show me that all Secularists are agreed upon these points? Mr. Holyoake tells us that "Secularism accepts no authority but that of nature, adopts no methods but those of science and philosophy, and respects in practice no rule but that of the conscience, illustrated by the common sense of mankind" ("Principles of Secularism," p. 14). Mr. Bradlaugh reiterates the same sentiment about nature. He says: "Secularism admits the authority of nature alone" ("Debate with the Rev. W. Barker," p. 114). It would appear, therefore, that both these teachers rely upon nature as a moral guide—Mr. Bradlaugh nature alone, and Mr. Holyoake the authority of nature, coupled with the rule of conscience? Where in nature is the moral guide to be found? Mr. J. S. Mill tells us that to follow nature would be both "irrational and immoral," the latter because "the course of natural phenomena being replete with everything which, when committed by human beings, is most worthy of abhorrence, any one who endeavoured in his actions to imitate the natural course of things would be universally seen and acknowledged to be the wickedest

of men" ("Essay on Nature," page 65). So that to follow the only moral guide which Mr. Bradlaugh recognises, and one of the two admitted by Mr. Holyoake, is, according to Mr. Mill, to become "the wickedest of men." As to conscience, Mr. Holyoake's other rule, let us hear another Secular teacher. Mrs. Besant says: "Conscience is not a safe guide—in fact, it is no guide at all" ("The True Basis of Morality," p. 9). Will Mr. Watts inform us how far he agrees with one or the other of these writers? In another place Mr. Holyoake tells us that the business of Secularism is "to teach that there exists, independently of Scriptural authority, guarantees of morality in human nature, intelligence and utility" (Debate with the Rev. Brewin Grant p. 8). This is a tacit admission that guarantees of morality do exist in the Scriptures, but that the business of the Secularist is to seek for them elsewhere. But why? If we have them in the New Testament, what more do we want? Going outside of Scripture, Mr. Holyoake seeks their guarantees in "human nature, intelligence, and utility." I shall be glad if Mr. Watts will differentiate between the two first named, and tell me what are the guarantees of morality in "human nature" apart from "intelligence," and what in "intelligence" apart from "human nature;" and how far each is a rule of life. Then as to utility. This seems to be only one of three guides: what, then, is its peculiar sphere? How far are we to follow Utilitarianism, and how far these other rules to which it is added? I confess that to me there seems a good deal of confusion here, and I shall be glad to see the matter made more clear.

3. How does it propose to satisfy the religious instincts of human nature? Worship of some kind is next to universal. This fact seems to point to a religious sentiment in man. As far as my reading of Secularism goes, it seeks to crush this out, and, if so, is likely to be about as successful as were the attempts of the Stoics to destroy human passions and emotions. In any case I must ask Mr. Watts to inform me whether he recognises such a sentiment. If no, how will he account for the origin of religions, and the practice of worship in all ages and in all lands? If yes, how is the want which such a sentiment invokes to be met? That Christianity

satisfies this want few men will doubt, since it claims to be a Revelation from the One True Object of worship. A brilliant writer, with no faith in Christianity, as I understand the term, speaks of Christ as the highest pillar in humanity, showing to "man whence he comes and whither he ought to tend" (Renan's "Life of Jesus"). But Secularism can do neither the one nor the other.

In conclusion, I shall be glad to know what Secularism has to offer to mankind for their good which Christianity has not? Its negations—and there are many—do not count. I want positive principles, and I wait to be informed what they are, and where they are. Mr. Gordon Flaws, a regular contributor to Mr. Watts's own paper, from a Secular standpoint, wrote once in those pages: "It is a cold-blooded word, this Secularism; a negative thing without beauty, force, suggestiveness, or aptness" (*Secular Review*, June 15th, 1878). I do not think I could give a better description of Secularism than this from the pen of a Secularist.

MR. WATTS'S FIRST LETTER.

My object in entering upon the present debate is to defend, to the best of my ability, Secularism from the misconceptions and attacks of the Rev. Dr. Sexton, and also to state wherein, in my opinion, Secular principles are superior to those teachings designated Christianity. It will be most desirable throughout the discussion for readers to remember that the alleged advantages of Christianity and Secularism are to be considered comparatively—that is, “which of the two is the better suited to meet the wants of mankind.” If Dr. Sexton keeps this important fact before him, he will probably see the necessity, when alluding to what he deems the insufficiency of Secularism, of showing that Christianity is more efficient as a reforming agency. It will not be my contention in this debate that Secular principles are altogether perfect, but rather that they commend themselves to my judgment as a better rule of life than orthodox Christian teachings.

Secularism may be defined as a term selected to represent principles (what those principles are will be explained during the debate), having reference to the existence and necessities of mankind on earth, neither affirming nor denying an existence “beyond the grave.” Secularists recognise this life as an indubitable fact; should there be another awaiting mankind in the future, all notions of such a state must, we think, be mere conjectures. Therefore, we deem it more useful to concentrate our efforts upon the *known* life—that which really is—seeking to realise its value, physically, morally, and intellectually, as fully as possible, thereby making the best of existence, and also preparing for the highest enjoyment of any supposed life hereafter, if future experience should demonstrate its reality. In reference to certain theological views professed by the Christian world, the state-

ment of the "Founder of Secularism" is here appropriate. "Many of us," he observes, "are not able to believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, distinct from nature; but we do not exact from members of Secular Societies an agreement in opinion on this theoretical question. We associate for practical purposes on the wide field of Secularism, outside the abstract question of the existence of Deity. Many of us do not hold the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; but neither do we exact agreement on this point from our friends. We seek the co-operation of all who can agree to promote present human improvement by present human means. The existence of God, the future condition of man, are questions which five thousand years of controversy have not settled; we, therefore, leave them open to the solution of intelligence and time; they shall not be with us barriers which shall divide us from our brethren; we will not embarrass human affairs with them. Morality, that system of human duties commencing from man, we will keep distinct from religion, that system of human duties assumed to commence from God" (Mr. Holyoake's debate with Rev. B. Grant in 1853, page 7).

Now, what is Christianity? Dr. Sexton says it "is a system complete in itself," and that it "is contained in the New Testament, and any one who desires to discover what it is has only to peruse that volume for himself." To say the least, this statement is exceedingly vague, and in order that the Doctor may be clearly understood, I would request him to tell me—

1. What is this "complete system"?
2. In what part of the New Testament can such a "system" be found?
3. Is it a "system" free from contradiction?
4. Does the "system" include and imply belief in the whole of the New Testament?

When Dr. Sexton has complied with this request, will he furthermore inform me whether or not all professing Christians "are agreed upon these points"? Are there no differences of opinion as to what the New Testament teaches between, for example, the Protestant and Catholic, the Churchman and Nonconformist, Sacramentarian and Unsacramentarian, Baptists and Pædobaptists, Unitarian and Trinitarian? Are all believers in this "complete

system " agreed as to the nature and mission of Christ, the existence and functions of the Devil, the character and duration of future rewards and punishments, the possibility of universal salvation, and the condition to be complied with to obtain this salvation? Do not the statements even of the New Testament expounders of this " system " conflict with each other? To my mind, the fact is wholly beyond doubt that in the writings of those men no connected, regular, harmonious system is to be found. The words used by my opponent respecting Secularism are exceedingly applicable to Christianity and the canonical books which contain it: " There are maxims, statements, precepts; but they do not form a consistent whole." Where, then, shall I learn what Christianity is, "*when those only who are competent to speak upon the subject are not agreed among themselves*"?

The quotations given by Dr. Sexton from Mr. Holyoake are in no way repugnant to, or contradictory of, Secular principles. In the first citation Mr. Holyoake was alluding to the highest claims urged on behalf of religion by its ablest recognised expounders; but he did not say those claims were true. By trying to make " religion coincide with morality " his object evidently was to discard all forms of religion which do not coincide with morals. This was an intellectual discrimination, and useful Secular work.

1. As to the " theory of the universe." Secularism allows its adherents to form what opinion upon this matter the individual deems in harmony with the evidence before him. Experience proves that uniformity of opinion upon speculative topics cannot obtain. All persons are left, therefore, to decide for themselves according to the " light before them." We impose no ancient conclusion as the limit and boundary upon modern thought, whether such conclusion may be deemed compatible or not with the genius of the age and the scientific progress of mankind. If men and women will work, irrespective of theological dogmas, for the good of society in this life, they are practical Secularists. Secularism is not necessarily Atheism or Theism; its principles are broad enough to admit either Theists, Atheists, or Pantheists within its ranks.

2. The Secular code of morals, based upon the prin-

ciple of utility, enjoins self-discipline, the love of truth, fidelity to conviction, acquirement and application of knowledge, fortitude in good conduct, temperance, magnanimity, justice, and considerateness for the rights, comfort, and welfare of others. My answer to the Doctor's four ethical questions is:—

(a) Human nature is the source of moral obligation. The more that nature is improved by experience and cultivation the better and stronger will be the moral source.

(b) Those actions only are moral which are beneficial to mankind, and which add to the welfare of society, of individual and collective man.

(c) The sanctions of morality are the protection of the individual and the debt he owes to the community for its protective service.

(d) The incentives to moral conduct are personal excellence and the general happiness and well-being of the community.

The Doctor's quotation as given from J. S. Mill upon "Nature" is misleading. That eminent thinker was speaking of nature when "*unmodified by man*"—"Essay on Nature, p. 25)—that is, as the poet says, of "Nature red in tooth and claw." But Mill also says that it is man's duty "to amend the course of nature, and bringing that part of it over which we can exercise control more nearly into conformity with a high standard of justice and goodness" (*ibid.*, p. 65). This substantiates my position—namely, that the moral source is in nature and that by Secular effort it can be discovered. The philosophy of Mr. Mill's essay is against the assumption that, if God was the author of nature, he made it perfect. It was reserved for man to improve natural phenomena by material means. Moreover, Mill was not speaking of human nature, but "the entire system of things, with the aggregate of all their properties.....apart from human intervention" (*ibid.*, 64).

It is quite right to say that "conscience is not [necessarily] a guide," and this agrees with Mr. Holyoake's statement that the "guarantees of morality were in intelligence and utility," which means that conscience is to be educated, for without proper education the worst crimes and most unjust actions may be "conscientiously"

committed. Does not the history of the so-called Christian faith prove this almost to demonstration?

3. When Dr. Sexton explains what he means by "religious instincts" and "religious sentiments" I will endeavour to show what relation his explanation has to Secularism. Certainly it is not the wish of Secularists to "crush out" the emotions of man, but only to wisely regulate them, and to guard against their predominance over the intellect.

I am asked what Secularism has to offer to mankind for their good which Christianity has not? Ample opportunity will be afforded ere this debate is concluded for a full reply to this question. At present my answer is:—

1. The right to reject, without peril or condemnation, whatever appears to us to be erroneous in any or all religions.

2. The full liberty to regard Christianity as merely the outgrowth of the human mind.

3. The advantage of accepting the Bible as nothing more than a human production.

4. The absence of any fear of being punished "hereafter" for this legitimate exercise of reason in its true sphere of absolute Freethought.

5. The acting upon the opinions that the principal attention of man should be given to "time," and not to "eternity."

6. That science is of more value to man than faith in the alleged supernatural.

The reference to the quotation given from Mr. Flaws, and the Doctor's comment thereon, were clearly answered by Mr. Flaws himself in last week's *Review*. The term "cold-blooded" did not apply to Secular *principles*, but to merely the *word* selected to represent those principles, which are far from being "cold-blooded." Secularism seeks to regulate life by science, and Science is the mother of all our material blessings, and is far more warm-blooded and beautiful than any of the religions which leave men to perish through lack of Secular aid, while trusting to assistance from the unknown and unseen.

Having noticed each paragraph and replied to all questions in Dr. Sexton's first letter, I await from him a statement as to what is the Christian "system" and its moral basis.

DR. SEXTON'S SECOND LETTER.

MR. WATTS says that "Secularism may be defined as a term selected to represent certain principles." Exactly. But what principles? It is these that I am in search of, and, as yet, have been unable to find. I have gone carefully over the Secularistic literature—such as it is—and have come across only what Sir Charles Coldstream discovered on looking into the crater of Vesuvius—nothing. These principles Mr. Watts has not given us; but he promises to explain them "during the debate," which is something. Well, patience is a virtue, so I will try to practise it, and wait. Only when they do appear, I hope I shall not recognise in them old acquaintances, which the world has both heard of and acted upon for hundreds of years before the founder of Secularism was born, and which are to-day in full force outside the Secular camp.

Mr. Holyoake is quoted to show that Secularism is not Atheism. But Mr. Bradlaugh says that it is—at least, to all except persons destitute of brains (*Debate with Holyoake*, page 16). Which of these two definitions of Secularism is the correct one? I asked in my first letter why I am to accept Mr. Watts's views as the true Secularism, when they are rejected by other leading Secularists; and I must again put the same question. Mr. Gordon Flaws—whose letter, I think, should not have been admitted into the paper during this debate, since I can hardly discuss with two opponents at the same time, unless I am allowed an equal space with them both—writes of what he calls "my Secularism." He has, evidently, a Secularism with a peculiar brand of his own; and this seems to be the case with most of the others. And if a Christian choose to call himself a Secularist, and to declare that Secularism includes Christianity, I see no ground upon which such a position can be dis-

allowed. For Secularism is clearly anything and everything which people may think fit to call by that name. The differences existing among Christians are not analogous, because all Christians are agreed as to the value of the authority from which they profess to derive their views. The diversity of opinion among them—and this only exists on minor points—arises from their different interpretations of the record. And this record constitutes a court to which appeal can be made in all cases of dispute. Secularism has no such court of appeal, and hence differences in its ranks, if on fundamental questions, are fatal to the whole thing.

As to what Christianity is, I have already said that any one who desires to know, has only to read the New Testament for himself. The whole system is summed up by its founder in a few words (*vide* Luke x. 27). The three queries put by Mr. Watts are easily answered.

1. Practically—and points of doctrine are not under discussion—love to man, based upon, and springing from, love to God. It is the very opposite of the Pagan systems—and Secular morals are at best but a poor copy of Pagan ethics—which commenced with man, not ended with him.

2. Interwoven into the entire book.

3. Quite free from real contradictions.

4. Certainly, all the New Testament.

Mr. Watts tries to explain away the meaning of the quotations that I gave from Mr. Holyoake, but without effect. I must again ask what religion it is which Secularism tries to establish the coincidence of with morality, and how the end is to be accomplished. To talk of discarding "all forms of religion which do not coincide with morals" is quite beside the question, for in Christianity there are no such. But even if there were, I want to know what is the religion that is left, when these are discarded, that Secularism proposes to adopt as coincident with morals.

Now to come to the three divisions of my first letter, let us see how my questions have been answered.

1. The Secular theory of the universe. Mr. Watts's answer amounts virtually to this, that Secularism has no theory to give. But to this I reply, that, in the first place, Mr. Bradlaugh holds a different view, for he pro-

claims Monism as the basis of his Atheism, and Atheism as the logical outcome of Secularism. And in this, if I mistake not, Mr. Watts once agreed with him. Secondly, this answer is an admission that Secularism is synonymous with ignorance—on this point at least. Mr. Watts says that Secularism is “broad enough to admit either Theists, Atheists, or Pantheists in its ranks.” But Mr. Bradlaugh holds a very different view, for he tells us that he is “obliged to destroy Theism to make way for Secularism” (Debate with Holyoake, page 13), which clearly means that until the belief in God is crushed out there is no place for even the foundation-stone of Secularism to be laid. And Dr. Allbutt, writing in Mr. Watts’s own paper, says: “We must destroy, not only Christianity, but every form of theology, ere we can hope thoroughly to reform the world” (*Secular Review*, May 25th, 1878). Now, which is the true Secularism, and which the counterfeit?

2. The Secular moral code. I asked Mr. Watts to differentiate the guarantees of morality in human nature, intelligence, and utility, and to tell me what guarantees there are in human nature apart from intelligence, and *vice versa*, and how far each is a rule of life. Then, utility with Mr. Holyoake is one of three guides, while with Mr. Watts it would seem to be the only guide. He replies to my queries—

(a) “Human nature is the source of moral obligation.” May I ask—(1) What part of human nature—the conscience, the intellect, or any other faculty? (2) Human nature in the individual or in society? (3) How is this conclusion arrived at? (4) How can human nature be the source of moral obligation when it is on that same human nature that the obligation rests? Is not this saying that the source of a thing is itself?

(b) “Those actions only are moral which are beneficial to mankind,” etc. But who is to decide what is beneficial to mankind? How are such benefits to be estimated, and who are the proper persons to estimate them? Upon this point *tot capita, tot sensus*.

(c) “The sanctions of morality are the protection of the individual,” etc. Is there, then, no moral sanction but such as arises from the protection that the individual himself may require of society? If so, this means that

I am to be moral for an end the most intensely selfish that can be conceived of. Hence it gets rid of self-sacrifice, unselfish generosity, and all those noble deeds which are always looked upon as constituting the very highest type of virtue. How fearfully inferior is this to Christianity, which commands us to do good hoping for nothing in return, to love our enemies, etc. ?

(d) "The incentives to moral conduct are personal excellence," etc. But suppose a man cares nothing for personal excellence or the general good : how is he to be induced to become moral ? This was just the point where Pagan ethics broke down so terribly.

The quotations from Mr. Mill I gave correctly, and Mr. Watts has not got rid of their force. Mill does not say that nature, when improved by man, can become a moral guide. And if he had, it would be nonsense. For how can that be a moral guide to man which he has himself to improve to make it one ? Does not every one see that we are in search of a rule to live by, and that which man moulds and modifies can be no such rule, for the very process of modification presupposes a guide to be following in doing it ? To say that man can improve nature is to say that he is higher than nature, and must himself supply to nature the moral guide, not find it there.

Then, respecting conscience, Mr. Watts says it must be educated. Yes ; but what is the power by which its education is to be effected, and where is the standard by which that education is to be measured ? Conscience cannot educate itself, for that is to suppose that it is already educated sufficiently to know the right ; in which case, the education is not necessary. I shall be glad if Mr. Watts will define conscience from his standpoint.

3. The religious instincts of human nature. Mr. Watts simply asks what these are, instead of replying to my queries as to how Secularism proposes to deal them. I stated in my first letter distinctly what I meant by the religious sentiment. I mean the feeling that prompts man everywhere to worship. How, I ask again, does Secularism propose to satisfy this ?

The advantages that Secularism has to offer in exchange for Christianity are very curious. Mr. Watts mentions six of these benefits ; but really they seem to

me to have about as much to do with Secularism *per se* as with Buddhism, or Mohammedanism, or Mesmerism, or Kepler's Laws.

No. 1 is a right belonging to humanity at large, and exercised by every man who uses the faculties that God has given him.

No. 2 is no advantage at all, except upon the supposition that Christianity is false, to assume which is a *petitio principii*, for that is the very point in dispute.

No. 3 is virtually the same as No. 2.

No. 4 assumes, what no Christian believes, that man is to be punished hereafter for the "legitimate exercise of reason."

No. 5 assumes that "time is of more importance than eternity," which is another *petitio principii*.

No. 6 implies that science by itself is of more value to man than the same science added to faith in God, for both are held by the Christian—this is to say, that half is greater than the whole.

Respecting Mr. Flaws, I gave the quotation correctly; no one says that I did not. But I am told that he meant the "name" Secularism. Be it so. Mr. Watts defends this "cold-blooded" name. Besides, the name is all that Secularism has to boast of; and if that is bad, the thing is in a poor plight.

MR. WATTS'S SECOND LETTER.

THE following is an answer to Dr. Sexton's question of what are Secular principles :—(1) That, as this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge, we seek to promote, by material means alone, the physical, moral, and intellectual condition of society. (2) That personal excellence and general usefulness in human affairs, being regarded by us as of greater importance than the consideration of theological speculations and the adherence to alleged supernatural teachings, should be the chief objects of human solicitude and labour. (3) That the basis of all conduct is the temporal well-being of the people, and the object of all action is the acquirement and practice of wisdom, truth, temperance, fortitude, and justice. (4) That reliance upon the discoveries of science, and in the benefits arising from their application to the needs of mankind, is preferable to reposing trust in theological faiths and the teachings of the Bible. (5) That the motive prompting to action should be the attainment of the highest possible individual and general happiness on earth, not the desire for personal enjoyment in the alleged heaven of Christianity. (6) That, if a just God exists, and if a judgment day ever arrives, honest inquiry, earnest conviction, integrity of character, and fidelity to principle should secure as warm an approval and as good a reward for the Secularist who rejects the faith of Christendom as could be obtained by the Christian who is able to believe in the teachings of the New Testament. (7) That to select the good and to reject the bad in any or all religions is a right that any and every person should be allowed honestly and conscientiously to exercise, without incurring any disadvantages here, or any punishment in any possible hereafter. Will Dr. Sexton indicate where principles superior to these are to be found in Christianity?

With the intention of showing what Christianity is, Dr. Sexton refers his readers to the supposed words of its founder, instead of accepting the opinions of his disciples. Why should not this principle be applied to Secularism? It is admitted that Mr. G. J. Holyoake is the originator of the term Secularism as applied to certain modern phases of thought and rules of conduct. It is, therefore, reasonable to ascertain from that gentleman what he intended should be understood by his application of the term. Upon this point Mr. Holyoake is exceedingly clear and emphatic—namely, that Secularism does not necessarily mean Atheism. Moreover, if Atheism is the “logical outcome of Secularism,” is not that an admission that it is possible to be the one without being the other? Does not Christianity present a similar case? Roman Catholics urge that the “logical outcome” of the belief in the New Testament is Catholicism. Protestants, however, think differently. Trinitarians contend that the logical meaning of Christianity is that the true principle of the Godhead is “three in one” and “one in three.” Unitarian Christians deny this “logical outcome.” A like difference obtains between the Ritualists and the Evangelical portion of the Church of England as to the “logical outcome” of the teaching and principles of that Church. Remembering that Christianity is claimed to be a Divine system, and that it enjoins uniformity of belief, while Secularism is acknowledged to be but a human production, allowing differences of opinion, perhaps my opponent will point out wherein Christianity is better than Secularism in this particular instance.

A Christian could not consistently call himself a Secularist, as the Doctor intimates, if he believes in the whole of the New Testament, as Dr. Sexton admits his system requires of him, inasmuch as portions of the New Testament are directly contrary to Secular teachings. Such, for instance, are those passages which allege : that man of himself can do no good thing ; that he should not resist evil ; that he should regard this world as of secondary importance ; that he should have faith in God before faith in science ; that, if he offends in one point of the law, “he is guilty of all ;” that poverty is a virtue ; that a man must take no thought for this life ; that he

must not lay up for himself treasures on earth ; that all mankind must believe that the world's redemption can only be obtained by one means and through one person ; that man cannot go to God except Christ draws him, and, that if he does not go, he will be cast into a hell of fire and brimstone, there to burn for ever and ever. These are but a few of the orthodox teachings which no Secularist can accept. It can be fairly admitted, as the Doctor states, that the differences among Christians are not analogous to those existing in the Secular ranks. With the former, the diversity pertains to such fundamental teachings as the Fall, the Atonement, the nature of man, the personality of the Devil, the existence of hell, and the divinity of Christ ; while Secularists are in agreement on all their cardinal principles. Can Dr. Sexton show any disagreement among Secularists upon the seven principles given above, or upon the six teachings mentioned in my last letter ?

My opponent affirms that Christians have " authority " as to whose " value they are all agreed." Value for what ? For settling disputed points among the various Christian sects ? Clearly, then, that " authority " is not the Bible, for its statements are so contradictory as to render it almost valueless in deciding what are really the teachings of Christianity ; hence the variety of sects existing to-day. (See the fifth paragraph in my last letter, to which Dr. Sexton has not yet replied.) Doubtless Shakespeare saw the value of this " authority " when he said : " The Devil can quote Scripture for his purpose," as we know that every Christian sectary, from the Anabaptist to the Muggletonian and the Quaker, has pretended to base his belief upon the words of the so-called sacred text. The Rev. Prebendary Irons, in his " Bible and its Interpreters," admits the difficulty of proving definitely, from such an " authority," the doctrines of " the Trinity, Atonement, Original Sin, the Sabbath, the Sacraments, the inspiration of the Bible, and eternal punishment." Speaking of the " records " of revelation, Dr. Irons says : " Such records have, of course, necessarily been regarded, not only as ' containing,' but as *imparting* truth ; and as truth may be subjective as well as objective, the widely different results arrived at among Christians practically clash with the supposition

of the 'all-sufficiency' of the Bible as a *medium* of truth to all classes alike" (Introduction, p. 3). Secularism has its court of appeal in the reason and experience of man in the past and present, and, if this court is not perfect and altogether infallible, it is, nevertheless, far more useful and reliable than the one mentioned by Dr. Sexton, which cannot be made of value at all without the aid of the Secular agency—reason.

The Doctor answers my query, "What is Christianity?" by referring me to Luke x. 27. But it is not enough to tell me *where* it is, I want to know *what* it is, and the nature of its leading essentials. When I am told what these are, I will then compare them with Secular principles, with a view to an unprejudiced decision. Will Dr. Sexton tell me if it is a necessary part of Christianity to believe—(1) Bible Theism; (2) that Christ was Divine in the sense of being a part of the Godhead; (3) that through the death and vicarious sacrifice of Christ, the world was redeemed from the alleged effects of the Fall as recorded in Genesis? (4) that the Devil is a person, and that hell is a place into which "the wicked" who know not God "shall be sent"? Does Christianity teach that all who have examined its principles, and who reject them, will be punished hereafter for that rejection. From an ethical standpoint, will the Doctor tell me what he regards Christianity as teaching in reference to—

- (a) The source of moral obligation?
- (b) The nature of a moral act?
- (c) The sanctions of morality?
- (d) The incentives to moral conduct?

Will he also inform me what good Christianity has in itself that a Secularist cannot avail himself of without subscribing to the Christian creeds?

1. In Luke x. 27 I fail to discover the summing-up of the whole of the Christian system. Christianity is more than Mosaism, or else Christ's coming would have been superfluous. The God whom it teaches to love is a unity in trinity and a trinity in unity. The Christianity of the New Testament is a system based upon faith, which is its first and chief essential. Besides, the teaching in the above passage is nothing more than a Theistic-Humanitarianism such as was inculcated and believed in centuries anterior to the Christian era.

2. If Christianity is "interwoven in the entire book"—that is, in the New Testament—has a man to master the whole contents of that book, from the genealogies given by Matthew to the "Amen" of Revelation, in order to discover the true religion? What is to be done as to the different meanings that readers will form of its contents? Surely the Doctor knows that such diametrically opposite meanings have been deduced. When was the New Testament, as it now stands, first received as an authentic Divine revelation? Before it was so received were there any Christians? and, if so, whence did they derive their religion? Where was Christianity in those centuries wherein the Scriptures were almost unknown in the vernacular?

I am asked: "What religion is it which Secularism tries to establish the coincidence of with morality?" I reply: all religions with which it comes in contact; and this has been found in some cases possible in reference to phases of advanced Theism, Unitarianism, and the Religion of Humanity. "How is this end to be accomplished?" inquires the Doctor. I answer: by making all speculative theology, including creeds and dogmas, subordinate to the task of promoting man's physical, moral, and intellectual improvement.

The theory of the universe.—Upon this subject the opinion of individual Freethinkers does not invalidate Secular principles. Secularism leaves its adherents to entertain, as to the universe, what ideas they deem reasonable. The same freedom is allowed as to Theistic notions.

The Secular moral code.—Undoubtedly, the guarantees of morality are in human nature; but intelligence and utility are required to give them practical force. Hence the more cultured and disciplined a people, the more useful—the more moral—they become. I reply to Dr. Sexton's ethical questions thus:—

(a) *Human nature is the source of moral obligation.*—

1. That part of human nature where reason, conscience, and the other intellectual faculties have their legitimate scope. 2. Both in the individual and in society. 3. By the aid of reason and experience. 4. Because human nature has, under proper training, the power of self-government.

(b) *Beneficial effects of actions.*—General society, by its effects in the formation and cultivation of habits of truth, honour, sobriety, and generally virtuous conduct.

(c) *The sanctions of morality.*—I have yet to learn of better sanctions than the duty of the individual to society and the duty of society to the individual. When Dr. Sexton has answered the four ethical questions put by me in the earlier part of this letter, it will be seen if he has any stronger or more truly authoritative sanctions to offer us. It must not be forgotten that this debate is one of comparison—"Which is the better, etc., Christianity or Secularism?" As to Secular sanctions being selfish, it is a selfishness which includes not merely the individual, but the general community. The "golden rule" is in reality based upon the fact that we wish others to deal fairly with us, and to do good to ourselves. Self-denial will always be manifested while human nature—its sympathies, kindliness, etc.—is constituted as it is. Did Dr. Sexton never hear of Roman generals (who were Pagans), such as Decius, devoting themselves to death as an encouragement to their soldiers? Has he no remembrance of the two heroic fathers who sacrificed their filial affection on the altar of duty—Brutus and Lartius? It is a great mistake to represent Christianity as enjoining good actions for their own sake, "hoping for nothing in return." What about giving to the poor in the full confidence of a plenteous return? What about the highest of all rewards according to Christianity—heaven? The obedience to parents from children is enjoined by the Bible teaching "that their days may be long upon the land." Even in the beatitudes the "pure in heart," the "peacemakers," are "blessed," "for they shall see God," and "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The persecuted are told to rejoice, "for great is your reward in heaven." Do not all these turn upon prospective rewards, not only as encouragements to, but as the principal reasons for, good actions in this life? Surely here are incentives, bribes, inducements, more "intensely selfish" at bottom than any human sanction upon which Secular morality is based.

(a) *Secular incentives.*—If a man cares nothing for personal excellence, it is our duty to seek to inspire such a desire within him by surrounding him with superior

conditions, and by making him practically interested in acquiring a sense of duty, and in acting in accordance with it when so acquired. It may possibly be the case that in a state of extreme barbarism there is no such strong sense of duty—self-preservation being perhaps the all-engrossing anxiety, though even self-preservation would lead to the evolution of such a sense; but among civilised peoples educational agencies have long been at work inculcating and developing that sense of duty to which I allude. Undoubtedly, as education progresses so will man's sense of what he owes both to himself and the community be proportionately intensified and strengthened. It does not follow that we should fail in our reformatory work to-day, because "Pagan ethics broke down." Will Dr. Sexton state how it happened that during the early Christian centuries Christian ethics "broke down," and that for hundreds of years, side by side with Christianity, the grossest immorality, licentiousness, and despotism were manifested by Christians? In those times New Testament morality obtained—that is, was accepted; but where were the cultivation of the sciences, the fostering of philosophy, and the diffusion of education—where, in brief, was true humanitarianism?

Having, in this reply, already exceeded the space agreed upon between the disputants, the answers to the remaining paragraphs of Dr. Sexton's second letter must stand over till my next contribution. Of course, my opponent has, in replying, a claim to an amount of space equal to that occupied by the present letter.

DR. SEXTON'S THIRD LETTER.

MR. WATTS'S last letter has extended to just double the space agreed upon at the commencement. As I am, however, to be allowed four columns instead of two, the only objection to the increase of space will be found in the fact that, if each letter is longer than its predecessor, there is a prospect of the whole of the *Review* being filled with the controversy before the end comes. And, despite the unusual length of my opponent's last letter, he has been compelled to omit, through want of space, any notice of some of the most important points that I had previously brought forward.

The so-called Secular principles enunciated in Mr. Watts's last are no more Secularism *per se* than they are Epicureanism, Stoicism, or Confucianism. The whole of them existed more or less in ancient philosophies. If these constitute Secularism, then it is, as I have often said, a "thing of shreds and patches," destitute of any principle of its own, and altogether lacking the method, unity, and cohesion that every system requires. The world knew all that Secularism can tell it, whole thousands of years before Mr. G. J. Holyoake was born. And the ancient systems from which Secularism has borrowed everything that it possesses are known to every student of history to have utterly and entirely failed in their object. As John Locke—no mean authority—says, it was "too hard a thing for unassisted reason to establish morality in all its parts, upon its true foundations, with a clear and convincing light." For there is an immense difficulty in discovering how any obligation and authority can attach to mere human opinions. "Such a body of ethics," says the same great writer, "proved to be the law of nature from the principles of reason and reaching all the duties of life, I think nobody will say the world had before our Saviour's time" ("Reasonableness,"

page 273). No new truth has been brought to light through the instrumentality of Secularism, and, consequently it cannot justify its existence to the intellect, to say nothing of its failing utterly to meet the deeper wants of human nature. Will Mr. Watts tell me what is its special and peculiar *raison d'être*? I can discover in it nothing but huge negations, which, of course, cannot be made the basis of a positive system. Glancing briefly at the seven so-called principles, there is really nothing in them to constitute a system, even were they peculiar to Secularism, which, as I have said, they are not. (1) The assertion that "this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge" is a huge assumption, meriting, therefore, no attention. The talk about promoting the well-being of society by "material means alone" is loose in the extreme. What are material means? If these are limited to the forces of matter, no one—not even the wildest Atheist—ever thinks of acting on the principle. But if they include thought, feeling, passion, emotion, etc., then they comprise just those means which everyone uses, be he Secularist or Christian. (2) This is simply an assumption that "theological speculations" and "supernatural teachings" interfere with general usefulness, which I deny *in toto*. (3) No one objects to this, since we, too, hold that "temporal well-being" is enjoined by Christianity, and is the proper preparation for an eternity of blessedness. (4) Another assumption—viz., that "theological faiths" and "the discoveries of science" cannot go together, and that Secularists have a peculiar monopoly of the latter, neither of which is a fact. (5) This is an utter mis-statement of the Christian motive in performing good acts. (6) In this, the Secularist has claimed to be a theologian, and to tell us what God will, and what he will not, do. But, as Mr. Watts is an Atheist, I fail to see how this can form one of *his* Secular principles. (7) Everybody professes to act upon this, and it has, therefore, about as much to do with Secularism as with physiology, or the law of the conservation of energy.

Mr. Watts seems to think that, as I referred to the founder of Christianity to show what Christianity is, so I ought to defer to the founder of Secularism as to what constitutes that *ism*. But I reply—in the first place, Mr. Holyoake does not claim infallibility; and when I find

therefore, his views opposed by those of other leading Secularists, it becomes impossible to adopt such a course. Secondly, to do this would be to make the Secular sect much narrower than it is, for it would exclude three-fourths of those who claim to be Secularists, and I am not quite certain but that Mr. Watts himself would be of the number.

As to Christianity in its diverse forms presenting an analogous case to the divisions among Secularists, I have already shown that it does not, inasmuch as we all bow to one authority, and differ only in our interpretation of the record. This authority Mr. Watts thinks is of no value because there is a disagreement on some points as to what it teaches. But I reply—first, that this fact in no sense affects the value of the record, since it is unavoidable in all matters with which finite minds have to do, and applies with equal force to Acts of Parliament, works on philosophy, and historical documents. Secondly, the differences which exist between Christians of every age and all countries are not nearly so great as unbelievers represent them to be and affect only minor questions, never fundamental doctrines. Most of the sects named by Mr. Watts himself are at one upon all great truths, and some others that he refers to can hardly be considered Christians at all, if the word is used in any legitimate sense. One might stop here to ask why every Secularistic writer drags in the “Muggletonians” as a Christian sect. There are no such people to be found to-day ; and when they did exist they could scarcely be considered Christians, since they were the followers of a madman, who claimed to have a peculiar revelation of his own, to which more importance was attached than to the teachings of the Scriptures. The reference to these people, first by Mr. Holyoake (debate with Mr. Bradlaugh, p. 72), then by Mr. Foote (“Secular Work and Organisation”), and now by Mr. Watts, shows how little acquaintance Secularists have with religious denominations. The passage from Dr. Irons by no means proves anything in favour of Mr. Watts’s view ; and the Doctor himself would be very much surprised to see it quoted for any such purpose.

In reply to my statement that Secularism has no court of appeal, and, therefore, no mode of settling its dis-

putes, Mr. Watts observes : " Secularism has its court of appeal in the reason and experience of man in the past and present." Does this mean the reason and experience of universal man, or of only a portion of mankind? If the former, it most assuredly cannot be quoted in favour of Secularism, for it has already decided on the side of religion and religious worship, both of which Secularists ignore. If the latter, what portion is it, what numbers does it comprise, and why should it be accepted as a standard of truth? To talk of reason and experience being on the side of Secularism is another gigantic *petitio principii* (the distinguishing characteristic of Secularistic reasoning), for it assumes the very point in dispute. When Mr. Watts asked me what Christianity was, I referred him to Luke x. 27. He now replies that it is not enough to tell him where it is, but what it is. I answer that the where and the what in this case are the same. Besides, I did explain what it was, as may be seen by a reference to my second letter. In answer to the string of questions as to what doctrines it involves, I answer :—(1) This debate is not of a doctrinal, but of a practical, character. (2) Whatever is contained in the New Testament, that is Christianity. In Luke x. 27 Mr. Watts discovers nothing but a " Theistic Humanitarianism, such as was inculcated and believed in centuries anterior to the Christian era." Will he tell me—(1) What " Theistic Humanitarianism " is, for it seems to be one of those terms that explain nothing? (2) When and where, save in the Christian Scriptures, human morality was made to be the outcome of love to God, springing from it as the branches from the trunk of the tree? Then I am asked whether there were any Christians before the New Testament was received as a Divine revelation. I reply, certainly ; there were Christians before the books of the New Testament were written, because there was then the oral teaching which afterwards became embodied in the writings of those who were inspired to produce them.

I must again advert to the question that I asked before—"What religion is it which Secularism tries to establish the coincidence of with morality?" To this Mr. Watts replies : " All religions with which it comes in contact ; and this has been found in some cases

possible in reference to phases of advanced Theism, Unitarianism, and the Religion of Humanity." I ask, then—(1) What is the Religion of Humanity? This is another phrase which I am constantly hearing used by Sceptics, and should like it defined. (2) How can any form of Theism coincide with Secularism when, as I have already shown, according to several of the leading Secular teachers, Secularism is Atheism? The attempt to make Theism coincide with Atheism is more vain than the search for the philosopher's stone, or the endeavour to discover perpetual motion. Mr. Watts, I know, says in this debate that Secularism is not Atheism, but I reply—(a) Mr. Bradlaugh asserts most positively that it is, and I have as much right to take him as an authority as my present opponent. (b) Mr. Watts himself once held this view, and I take it he was as good an exponent of Secularism then as he is now. (c) It declares all theological teachings to be obstructive of human improvement and happiness ("National Secular Society's Almanack"), which is assuredly Atheism and nothing else.

On the theory of the universe it is clear, from my opponent's own admissions, that Secularism has nothing to say. Upon this point, therefore, it is synonymous with ignorance, and utterly breaks down as a system of philosophy, and must fail egregiously to satisfy the intellectual wants of man.

With regard to the question of morals, I have, in both my previous letters, asked Mr. Watts to differentiate the guarantees of morality in human nature, intelligence, and utility. I am now informed that the "guarantees of morality are in human nature, but intelligence and utility are required to give them force." This is, however, a very different statement to that which I quoted from Mr. Holyoake in my first letter. But even if it were not, I must ask again, What are these guarantees of morality, and where are they to be found? It will be seen, on a reference to my first letter, that Mr. Holyoake appeals to five sources of morals—viz., nature, human nature, intelligence, conscience, and utility. The whole matter stands thus:—Nature + Human Nature (which is included in the first term) + Intelligence (which is included in the second) + Conscience (also included in

the second) + Utility (which is an outcome of the second) = Morality, here standing as x . Will Mr. Watts kindly work out this equation. The only real guide here can, after all, be simply Nature, for it includes all the rest; and this Mr. John Stuart Mill has declared to be immoral, and in the habit of doing every day such acts as men would be hanged or imprisoned for performing. Referring to my first four queries, Mr. Watts says:—

(a) *Human nature is the source of moral obligation.*—

1. "That part of human nature where reason, conscience, and the other intellectual faculties have their legitimate scope." May I ask what part of human nature this is, and how it is discovered—in a word, the method of Secularistic morals? 2. "Both in the individual and in society." This is excessively vague, for the question arises, how is it arrived at, and who is the proper person to appeal to in reference to it. 3. "By the aid of reason and experience." But the reason and experience of the mass of men have no bearing on the subject. 4. This is no answer at all to my question how the source of an obligation can be the same as that on which the obligation rests.

(b) *Beneficial effects of actions.*—The answer given here is no reply at all to my questions, who is to decide what is beneficial to mankind? how are such benefits to be estimated? and who are the proper persons to estimate them? For upon these points history shows that a hundred different opinions prevail.

(c) *The sanctions of morality.*—These Mr. Watts first told us were the protection of the individual. In his last letter he substitutes for the term protection "duty," a change to which I decidedly object; for these terms are not synonymous. That which I do with a view to protect myself may be totally different to that which I would do as a matter of duty. The former is simply selfishness; the latter may be a most disinterested act. I must ask Mr. Watts which of these two words he intends to stand by? If the former, then, as I before said, the basis of his morality is simply selfishness. If the latter, then he must define the term duty, and tell me how it arises, and on what it is based. In reference to Christianity, I shall maintain that its moral sanctions are higher than any

hope of reward in the future, although the reward will necessarily follow the actions performed here.

(*d*) *Secular incentives*.—Mr. Watts says: "If a man cares nothing for personal excellence, it is our duty to seek to inspire such a desire within him." 1. Who are the persons included in this "our." Does not such an assumption arrogate a superiority on their part? 2. How will he prove that this is a duty, and how does the duty arise? 3. How is the task to be accomplished? For nothing can be more clear than that intellectual opinions, as such, have ever failed to influence men morally.

Mr. Watts desires me to reply from my standpoint to the four queries I put to him. I will do so.

(*a*) The source of moral obligation is the holiness of God, and, in a secondary sense, the moral nature which He has given to man. As Coleridge has it, "in Christendom religion is and ever has been the moral centre of gravity" ("The Friend," ii., p. 163). Christian morality has its basis in the relation of God to His creatures. The ultimate reason why right is right lies in the nature of God.

(*b*) A moral act is that which harmonises with the Will of God, and, *à fortiori*, with the eternal laws of Right and Wrong. Christian morality is synthetic. All Pagan morality—and that of Secularism is of the same kind—was analytic. In the one the end is given at starting, in the other the end has to be reached by a most laborious process, and, in the great majority of cases, is never reached at all.

(*c*) The sanctions of morality are found in the Revelation which God has given of His Will to man.

(*d*) The incentives to moral conduct are the desire to develop our highest spiritual powers, conformity to the Will of God, and the aspiration after holiness.

In conclusion, Mr. Watts asked me how it happened "that for hundreds of years side by side with Christianity the grossest immorality and licentiousness were manifested by Christians." I reply that immorality and licentiousness never were manifested by Christians, but only by persons who bore the Christian name. In a passage which I have no space to quote here Mr. Watts protests ("Secularism in its Various Relations," p. 51) against Secularism being held responsible for the vices of Sceptics. Upon the same principle, Christianity is not to be

held responsible for the faults of so-called Christians. If my opponent desires to discuss men rather than principles, I have no fear for the result ; but I doubt very much whether his side would gain by such a course of procedure. Nor would it be either to my taste or conducive to the interest of the general reader.

MR. WATTS'S THIRD LETTER.

DR. SEXTON, in his second letter, states that the Christian system is "quite free from real contradictions." Against this assertion the fifth paragraph in my first letter remains unnoticed by my opponent. I once more ask him to reply to the contradictory doctrines there referred to. That other professing Christians differ from Dr. Sexton in this matter is clear from the following. Moses Stuart admits that "in our present copies of the Scripture there are some discrepancies between different portions of them which no learning or ingenuity can reconcile" ("Critical History," revised edition, p. 179). Professor Jowett observes: "When we demand logical equivalents and similarity of circumstances; when we balance adverse statements—St. James and St. Paul, the New Testament with the Old—it will be hard to demonstrate from Scripture any complex system either of doctrine or practice.....For example, the comparison of St. John and the Synoptic Gospels, or the Gospel of St. John with the Revelation of St. John, will tend rather to confuse than to elucidate the meaning of either" (essay on "Interpretation of Scripture). Dr. Irons, having pointed out the different systems found in the Bible by Wesley, Gill, and Whiston, remarks: "It cannot be said that the differences between such men are even comparatively small. The first would have thought the doctrine of absolute predestination held by the second to be incredibly blasphemous; and he has left that on record. The second would think the first to be utterly a 'carnal' and self-deceived man. The third would be regarded by the first and second as a denier of the foundations of Christianity" ("The Bible and its Interpreters," pp. 76, 77). Dr. Irons adds: "It might be easy even to show that what is now popularly thought to be in some respects the true and only meaning of the great

doctrines of Christianity had no existence at all in the earliest days, either as exegetical conclusions or as traditions " (ibid, p. 79). Can my opponent produce from Secular writers such damaging testimony against *their* authority as is here cited from Christian authors against my opponent's " court of appeal."

It would be exceedingly easy to fill this letter with contradictions from the New Testament, both as to events and doctrines. At present, however, a few instances only must suffice to show that Dr. Sexton's authority is not infallible, and not superior to that accepted by Secularists. When did Christ foretell that Peter would deny him? Matthew (xxvi.) says it was *after* he (Christ) had gone into the Mount of Olives. Luke (xxii.) states that it was *before* he started for the Mount. Did Christ possess all power? According to Matthew (xxviii. 18), yes; according to Mark (vi. 5), no. Did Christ know all things? John (xvi. 30) says that he did; Mark (xiii. 32) avows that he did not. Was it a part of Christ's mission to judge the world? John v. 22—27 replies affirmatively; but in chapter xii. 47 a direct negative is given. At Saul's conversion did his attendants hear the voice there spoken of? Judging from Acts ix. 7, they did; but in Acts xxii. 9 it is stated they did not. In 1 Timothy ii. 4 we learn that all men can be saved; but in 2 Thessalonians ii. 11, 12, we are informed that God sent strong delusions that certain parties should be damned. Will all sin be ultimately forgiven? One would think so from reading Acts xiii. 39. When, however, we turn to Mark iii. 29, we are told that he who blasphemes against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven. Will Dr. Sexton inform us who the Holy Ghost really is? also what constitutes blasphemy in this instance? In James v. 16 we learn that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much; while St. Paul states (Romans iii. 10): "There is none righteous; no, not one." John assures us that he who hateth his brother is a murderer, and that such a person hath not eternal life; yet Christ says that, to become disciples of his, men must hate their brethren (Luke xiv. 26), which, according to the fourth Gospel, is to impose conditions upon converts, compliance with which would deprive them of eternal life. John states that Christ was sent to save the world. This is directly

shown to be otherwise by Mark, who alleges (iv. 11, 12) that Christ expounded his views to some persons in a mystic form, "lest at any time they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven them." Taking these few examples from the New Testament as illustrative of the contradictory nature of my opponent's "authority" in connection with the conflicting statements from the same source as to the birth, mission, teachings, arrest, trial, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, who can regard orthodox Christianity as being free from real contradiction?

It was the inferences deduced by Dr. Sexton from J. S. Mill, not his quotation from that writer, that were urged by me as being incorrect. If the "moral guide" is not in nature, will my opponent state where it is? Can "a rule to live by" be found apart from nature? If so, where? "Nature," says Mill, "means the sum of all phenomena, together with the causes that produce them, including not only all that happens, but all that is capable of happening" ("Essay on Nature," p. 5). Again: "Though we can do nothing except through laws of nature, we can use one law to counteract another" (ibid, p. 17). The reader is referred to the eighth paragraph in my first letter, in the latter part of which he will find stated Mill's position and the argument it furnishes against orthodox Theism, to which, be it remembered, the Doctor has not yet replied.

Dr. Sexton asks me to define conscience. I readily do so. Conscience is the susceptibility of feeling of approval when a person does that which he believes or knows to be right, or of disapproval at acting reversely. It is not ultimate in deciding what is right or wrong; that is done by the intellect, resulting from, and co-terminous with, the specialities of individual organisation and the sum of individual experience. Conscience is, therefore, a feeling depending for its nature on training and knowledge. These impart the power by which its education is to be effected.

Dr. Sexton has not yet explained what the "religious sentiment" is. He now says that it is "the feeling that prompts man everywhere to worship." Yes, but what is that "feeling"? To say that sentiment is feeling is no definition, but the substitution of one word for another.

As probably this point will constitute an important feature in the present debate, it is desirable that we should perfectly understand what is meant by the terms used. Is this sentiment or feeling anything more than the human instinct called reverence? If yes, what? If no, then Secularism recognises it, fosters it, and urges its adherents to revere whatever is real if it be useful and good.

In reference to the six advantages of Secularism mentioned in my first letter, my opponent says they have as "much to do with Secularism *per se* as with Buddhism," etc. Even if this were true, it would not affect the point at issue here. The question is, Are they advantages which Secularism has and which Christianity has not? My answer is decidedly in the affirmative. Let us see if this is so:—

1. The right is here affirmed that a man may reject any or all the religions in the world without fear of condemnation. Secularism defends this right; Christianity condemns it. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16).

2. Liberty is here given to consider Christianity as a mere human production. Secularism grants this. The Christian Church and my present opponent contend that Christianity is a Divine system, and that its founder was a part of the Godhead. To those who do not obey Christ's Gospel he will come "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them" (2 Thess. i. 8).

3. Here the right to refuse believing the Bible to be a revelation from God to man is avowed. Orthodox Christianity cannot and does not concede this. If it did, Dr. Sexton's "court of appeal" would be at once gone as an infallible "authority."

4. The necessity of Freethought is here proclaimed, even if it culminates in the rejection of alleged supernaturalism. In the case of such rejection, Christianity says: "For whosoever will deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew x. 33).

5. It is here asserted that the acting upon knowledge of "time" is of greater benefit to man than attending principally to speculations of belief in eternity. Secularism teaches

this, and the world practically acts upon it. If this is an assumption, let my opponent show (*a*) that national progress is the result of aught else but the devotion of man's principal attention to the things of "time;" and (*b*) that such attention renders a person less fit for any possible "eternity."

6. The superiority and pre-eminence of science is here alleged; an allegation endorsed by my opponent when he says, in his reply to Professor Tyndall, that science shows "us how we may best apply the great powers of the universe to earthly comfort and human convenience" ("Scientific Materialism," p. 2). Dr. Sexton contends, however, that science is more potent when allied with Christianity. Where, however, shall we find that alliance? In the New Testament, which says: "Take no thought for your life;" "Labour not for the meat which perisheth;" "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?" "Man is saved by faith without works;" "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth;" "For the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God;" "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the Church.....and the prayer of faith shall save the sick;" "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God;" "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things [material wants of man] shall be added unto you"? Shall we look for an impetus given to science among the early Christians who thoroughly neglected this world for "eternity"? Did science receive encouragement from Christianity during the Middle Ages, when the Christian Church was supreme, and when by its members every scientific truth was persistently opposed? If orthodox Christians favour science to-day, it is because they know that to its power they are indebted for the advantages of the nineteenth century, and that the spirit of the age is too Secular to tolerate theological obstruction to scientific advancement.

I now come to Dr. Sexton's third letter; and here my opponent is reminded that he has omitted to answer some important questions which I put to him at the conclusion of paragraphs one, two, three, and five of my previous letter. Will he kindly refer to those questions.

and reply to them in his next letter. In the same epistle I also mentioned several teachings from the New Testament to show wherein Secularism differs from orthodox Christianity. Upon those teachings Dr. Sexton has been silent. He will excuse my saying that the laws which regulate discussions of this kind require, either that each disputant should reply *seriatim* to his opponent, or should candidly acknowledge his inability or objection to satisfactorily deal with those points which he leaves untouched. Had Dr. Sexton borne this in mind, this letter would have contained a reply to the whole of his last communication. As the adage says, any one can ask questions in five minutes which would require the labour of many hours to answer. While I conscientiously endeavour to meet all my opponent's statements and to reply to his questions, I think the cause he advocates requires a similar attention from him.

An objection is again urged by my opponent against Secular principles because it is said they are not original. This comes with bad grace from one who is contending for the superiority of Christianity. Surely Dr. Sexton will not contend for the originality of either Christian ethics or Christian doctrines. If he do, it will not be difficult for me to show that the principal moral teachings and leading doctrines contained in the New Testament existed long before the Christian era. If, on the other hand, my opponent admits that the elements of his faith are not original, wherein is the superiority of Christianity over Secularism in this particular? If we grant that Secularism has borrowed its ethics from previous systems, so most assuredly has Christianity; but while orthodoxy has incorporated with them foolish, impracticable, and, in some instances, degrading doctrines, Secularism has retained the valuable found in ancient morality, and allied with it the utility and inspiration of modern thought, and the advantages gained by subsequent experience. The opinion given from John Locke—whose great powers as a metaphysician are unquestioned—I place side by side with the view of another equally great and better-informed—inasmuch as he lived in a later century—writer, J. S. Mill, who says of Christianity: "I do not scruple to say of it that it is, in many important points, incomplete and one-sided, and that unless ideas and

feelings, not sanctioned by it, had contributed to the formation of European life and character, human affairs would have been in a worse condition than they now are."

The *raison d'être* of Secularism can be found in the six advantages given above, and in its eclectic principle of selecting—irrespective of theological speculations—the useful from all faiths and systems, relying upon human reason, when enlightened by the intelligence of the nineteenth century, for the beneficial employment of such selection in the formation of human character and the consolidation of the virtues which add to the nobility of man.

In my second letter I gave seven Secular principles, and the reader is requested to mark attentively Dr. Sexton's reply. He does not attempt to show that Christianity is superior in respect to the principles indicated by me. In reference to his comments upon Secular principles, I must inquire (1) what *knowledge* has my opponent of another life? Secularism does not necessarily preclude a *belief* in a future existence, providing such a belief in no way interferes with Secular action. (2) Was it not "theological speculations" that for more than eight hundred years prevented the recognition and diffusion of science, philosophy, and education? What, I ask, is the moral of the persecution of Roger Bacon, of Galileo, of Giordano Bruno, and the ridiculous opposition of both Catholics and Protestants to astronomy, geology, and other sciences? If Dr. Sexton denies this persecution, proof shall be given of its accuracy. (3) It must be shown how Christianity can promote the "temporal well-being" of man if the passages already given from the New Testament were acted upon. (4) The possibility of an alliance between faith and science has been already dealt with in this letter. (5) If happiness in heaven is not the Christian motive to good action, what is? (6) The point here is that a just God could not, being just, punish any person for the honest adherence to what he deems true. (7) Will Christianity allow me to reject its doctrines without threatening punishment hereafter? Secularism takes thought of no such punishment in its principles; is it not, therefore, in this case, superior to Christianity, part of whose doctrines is that of eternal perdition?

The remaining portion of Dr. Sexton's third letter will be noticed in my next.

DR. SEXTON'S FOURTH LETTER.

MR. WATTS lags behind in this debate—hence he leaves three-fourths of my last letter unanswered for want of space. This is a little inconvenient and confusing. He pleads that I ask a great many questions. But he has the same liberty, and his letters will show that he has not been slow to avail himself of it. Besides, in his last he opened up a good deal of new ground which might have been left to stand over, as he was pressed for space. However, I have no desire to complain, as each disputant is free to take his own course, and to pursue that line of argument that he deems the best. My questions were absolutely necessary in order to elicit from my opponent some information regarding the nature of Secularism and its attitude towards the great questions of human life. Up to the present I have not succeeded in getting the thing presented in such a definite form as I desire, in order that I may be able to judge of its capability of meeting the wants of human nature. I asked in my last what was the *raison d'être* of Secularism; and, in reply, I am informed that it will be found in the “six advantages” stated in my opponent’s first letter. But it is admitted that these so called advantages are not peculiar to Secularism, and clearly, therefore, they cannot furnish its *raison d'être*.

As yet, I have failed to discover anything distinctive in Secularism. It seems to me to be a mere hodge-podge of heterogeneous elements, lacking not simply originality, but method, consistency, harmony, and plan. It can do nothing, because it is nothing. And this is not a Christian opinion simply, for Secularists themselves seem to have occasionally arrived at the same conclusion. Mr. W. Stewart Ross, an able contributor to Mr. Watts’s own journal, and a leading member of the British

Secular Union, thus writes in reference to Mr. Watts's Secularism: "I unequivocally say that it is nothing as a distinctive system of practical ethics. It recommends 'primary' attention to the affairs of this world, but does not exclude *secondary* attention to speculations as to another world and the irrational mental and moral degradation which in all history such speculations have been found to involve. Christian practice, if not Christian theory, I may point out, is as distinctly on the lines of the British Secular Union school of Secularism as it is possible for it to be. Christian practice and British Secular Union Secular theory are in this country strictly identical. They each give primary attention to the things of this world, and each give their *secondary* attention at pleasure to supernatural communings which gratify the speculative and superstitious element of their character. Is this so, or is it not? If not so, How? If it be so, What is the special mission of British Secular Union Secularism? What justification can it plead for its existence, for its galvanic counterfeit of genuine vitality?" (*Secular Review*, Sept. 4th, 1880, p. 157). Mr. Ross, it is clear, has a Secularism which is in more direct antagonism to Christianity than that of my present opponent. Mr. Holyoake, on the other hand, says: "Secularism is not an argument against Christianity—it is one independent of it. It does not question the pretensions of Christianity; it advances others" (Article on "Secularism" in *Chambers's Encyclopædia*). Now, which of these three eminent Secularists is the real Simon Pure? Only one of them can be right. Mr. Holyoake's Secularism does not "question the pretensions of Christianity," while Mr. Watts in these very letters attacks those pretensions might and main.

The thirteen so-called Secular characteristics which Mr. Watts has set forth I have already replied to; but, as he has reiterated them in his last, I will briefly glance at them again. The first six are redolent of such terms as "right," "liberty," and so on, as though Secularists had higher rights, enjoyed greater liberty, and were freer than any other people in the world. Now, a very curious comment on all this tall-talk is the fact that Secularism denies freedom altogether. Mr. Holyoake says: "An iron necessity overrules human destiny" (*Reasoner*, vol. v.,

p. 358). Mr. Bradlaugh tells us that "man cannot resist the circumstances that result in volition. As to this he had no freedom of selection" (Debate with Thomas Cooper, p. 43). And all Secularists are, I believe without exception, Necessitarians. Will Mr. Watts kindly explain how there can be any right or liberty, or indeed any moral act, where there is no freedom of choice?

Then, again, these six advantages contain no rule of life, and throw no light on the great problems of existence. They are, in fact, platitudes—nothing more. Four of them take for granted that Christianity is false, which is begging the whole question, and only one has a reference to anything of a positive character, and even that assumes, what is utterly untrue, that science and faith in the supernatural cannot go together. Mr. Watts represents me as saying on this point that "science is more potent when allied with Christianity." Assuredly I can have said nothing so absurd. The potency of science is unaffected by any form of religious faith. What I did say was that science and faith in God were of more value than science by itself; to dispute which is to assert that half is greater than the whole. As science is here put in antagonism with faith in the supernatural as a characteristic of Secularism, it is, of course, implied (1) that Secularists are more scientific than other people, and (2) that no Secularist can believe in the supernatural. Now, it need hardly be stated, because it is a fact known to all, that the most eminent men of science have always been Christians. And, as a rule, Secularists never cultivate science. Where are the science classes in their halls—classes which to-day are found in abundance in connection with every religious denomination in the country? Scientific lectures, as Mr. Watts well knows, are seldom delivered in Secular places of meeting, and when they are given, very few persons attend them. Then as to the supernatural. To believe in this is, according to Mr. Watts, to cease to be a Secularist. But Mr. Holyoake thinks very differently. He says: "There may be help from prayer or from Providence. Upon these points the members of the Secular Society form such opinions as the facts may seem to warrant, and they are equally free to affirm or deny the existence or

availability of supernatural aid" ("Trial of Theism," p. 174). What, then, becomes of number six "advantage"?

The seven "principles" are as vague as the six "advantages," and cannot be made to constitute a system either of philosophy or ethics. No. 1 assumes that there is no future life, and talks about promoting the well-being of society by "material means." I wait for a reply to the queries in my last letter respecting these "material means." As to the future life, Mr. Watts knows perfectly well that Christianity claims to have revealed that life; and our knowledge of it is obtained from the New Testament. He says now, however, with strange inconsistency, that "Secularism does not preclude a belief in a future existence." Does it not? Then principle No. 1 is at an end, and may be erased from the list, for, if there be a future eternal existence in store for man, it must assuredly be of more importance than a brief temporal life here. But Mr. Watts has emphatically denied such life (*vide* "Secularism in its Various Relations," p. 56), and Mr. Foote has declared the belief in it "a curse" ("God, the Soul, and a Future Life," p. 24). No. 2 Mr. Watts attempts to support by talking about the persecution that has arisen from "theological speculations." May I ask from what source the persecution springs where there is no "theological speculation"? The most brilliant contributor to the columns of Mr. Watts's own paper—Mr. William Maccall—has well said: "If they were afraid of persecution, they knew from what quarter it would come. Some of them knew by experience from what quarter it *has* come—from the chaotic camp of Socinians, Deists, Atheists, Nothingarians, Negationists, who make the loudest outcry against persecution" (*S. R.*, June 22nd, 1878). And I have not quite forgotten a pamphlet which Mr. Watts himself issued, in which he declared that a leading Secularist was more intolerant than the Pope of Rome, or words to that effect. Persecution! Why it was only the other day that Mr. Watts's "Freethought" paper was not allowed to be sold in a so-called "Freethought hall" because of a difference between the editor and the chief authority at the hall, who happened to be the President of the "National Secular Society." Persecution! Well,

considering what Mr. Watts has lately written on that subject in the columns of this very paper, I think he must have laughed outright when he dragged in neck and crop poor Roger Bacon, Galileo, and that worthy without whose name no Secular publication would be complete, Bruno. No, my friend, persecution is independent of all forms of faith; it arises from the evil passions of human nature. No. 3 is Christian rather than Secularistic, as will be shown before this debate is ended. No. 4 is of the same character as No. 6 of the "advantages," and one reply does for both. No. 5 misstates the Christian motive, as I have said before. Mr. Watts asks what is this motive. I have given it at the end of my last letter, under "incentives to moral conduct." No. 6 talks of a "just God." Will Mr. Watts tell me—1. Whether he believes in a just God? 2. Whether he owes any responsibility to such a Being? Unless both of these questions are answered in the affirmative, this can be no Secular principle. Mr. Bradlaugh has stated most distinctly that Secularism is Atheism (*vide* Debate with Dr. Harrison, p. 13). In this passage he does not simply say that Atheism is the logical outcome of Secularism, but that Secularism is Atheism. How, then, can it be a Secular "principle" to decide what a just God will and what He will not do? No. 7, as I have before said, every person professes to act upon. Mr. Watts asks if he may reject Christianity without being punished for it. I reply, you cannot reject any truth without suffering the consequences of such rejection. And if Christianity be true, he who rejects it will suffer the loss of the privileges which it procures for those who accept it. In this respect it is no exception to other truths.

Now, these seven ticketed statements are none of them *principles*. They do not, and cannot, constitute a system. They afford no light to walk by, no guide in human conduct, no mode of solving the great problems of human life, or of discovering human destiny. Has Christianity anything better than these? Has the sun more light than the glow-worm? Christianity illumines the whole path of life, and throws a light beyond the tomb. It shows man whence he came, and to what goal he is hastening. It reads the riddle of the universe, which old Œdipus himself could not guess. Greg—an

unbeliever, and therefore on my opponent's side—says of Christianity that it is “unimprovable and unsurpassable,” “fitted, if obeyed, to make earth a paradise, and man only a little lower than the angels” (“Creed of Christendom,” p. 224). Can anything do more than this for the present world, to say nothing of the future life? What writer has ever spoken in such terms of Secularism?

The question of the moral guide in Secularism I shall not deal with now, because Mr. Watts did not, in his last, reach that part of my letter in which I discussed this subject. I await his reply before proceeding further on that score. I shall be glad, however, if, when he comes to deal with the matter, he will answer the two following questions:—1. Is there such a thing as absolute morality? 2. Is man a responsible being?

The definition which my opponent has given of conscience utterly precludes the possibility of its being accepted as a guide in life. As “it is not ultimate in deciding what is right or wrong,” I shall be glad to know what is, and also how far this conscience is to be allowed to decide for us at all. With Mr. Holyoake it is, as I have said, an important factor in morals; with Mrs. Besant it counts for nothing; I want to learn Mr. Watts's whereabouts in the matter. But we shall have to return to this question again hereafter.

As to John Stuart Mill, I neither misquoted nor misinterpreted him. I gave his own words. He says emphatically that to follow nature would be both “irrational and immoral,” and he also remarks: “In sober truth, nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another are Nature's everyday performances” (“Essay on Nature,” p. 28). Then clearly nature can be no guide in morals. To talk about improving nature is beside the question, for where is the moral guide to be found while the improvement is going on, and by which, in fact, it is to be regulated? Surely this matter is as clear as daylight. But if the moral law be not found in nature, where is it, Mr. Watts asks. I have replied to this in my last letter. And I retort—if it is found in nature, where and in what part? Mill, of course, being a Utilitarian pure and simple, did not boggle over the matter; with him utility was the

standard of morals, not nature. But Mr. Watts is not content to adopt this view. He is quite right in taking his own course ; only he must not object to be shown that Mill is against him. My position is that they are both wrong.

As to the religious instinct, Mr. Watts seems determined not to deal with it. Well, let it go. Clearly Secularism has nothing to say on the subject, and this is one of its grave defects. Worship is next to universal, which fact points to some deep-seated instinct in humanity. And any system which does not make provision for the operation of this instinct is about as likely to succeed as would be a Society that should advocate the doing without our eyes or our ears, or abstaining altogether from food.

In reply to my objection that Secularism has in it nothing distinctive or peculiar, Mr. Watts remarks : " Surely Dr. Sexton does not contend for the originality of either Christian ethics or Christian doctrines." Most assuredly I do contend for the originality of Christianity. Its moral precepts may be old, but its method is its own. What it took from other sources it bound with a new bond, gave new sanctions to, placed before its disciples new incentives to action, and promised a new and supernatural aid to assist in obeying its mandates. It was the influx of a new Power in the world. Where can its doctrine of Regeneration be found in any other system ? Lecky—himself a Sceptic—says on this subject : " Nothing can, as I conceive, be more erroneous or superficial than the reasoning of those who maintain that the moral element in Christianity has in it nothing distinctive or peculiar.....The true originality of a system of moral teaching depends not so much upon the elements of which it is composed as upon the manner in which they are fused into a symmetrical whole, upon the proportionate value that is attached to different qualities, or, to state the same thing by a single word, upon the type of character that is formed. Now, it is quite certain that the Christian type differs not only in degree, but in kind, from the Pagan one" (" *Rat. in Europe*," i., p. 338).

As to the uncertainty regarding the teachings of the New Testament, I maintain that it is a pure fiction,

despite the quotations from the three authors given by my opponent. I am writing this letter in Durham, and therefore have not at hand the books referred to ; but I may reply, that the passage from Moses Stuart seems only to refer to our ordinary versions, not to the originals ; that from Jowett I ascribe to his Rationalistic tendencies—certainly I do not agree with it (and I say this with all due deference to the Professor, who is, of course, a most able man) ; while Dr. Irons is known to hold peculiar views in favour of what he calls the Church. But he contends for pure Christianity notwithstanding, as I will hereafter show, if necessary, by a score of quotations from the very book to which Mr. Watts makes appeal.

The alleged contradictions in the New Testament, referred to, are trivial in the extreme. (1) The denial of Christ by Peter presents no difficulty to any who knows the geography of the place, and the position of Gethsemane and the Mount of Olives. The Lord went to the Mount more than once on this occasion. (2) John says that Christ knew all things ; “ Mark avows that he did not.” No one who reads the New Testament carefully can fail to see that our Lord sometimes speaks in His human nature, and at other times His language rises up from the infinite depths of His Godhead. We read of Him that He “ increased in wisdom and stature,” in which case His human nature alone is referred to ; and we are also informed that He was the Logos that was from eternity with God ; that he is the “ Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” In the passage in Mark He speaks not simply in his human nature, but in His condition of humiliation. Nor do Christians in general see any incongruity in this. Ewald—no mean authority—remarks : “ Even the highest divine power, when it veils itself in mortal body, and appears in definite time, finds in this body and this time its limits ” (“ Life of Christ,” p. 340). And Bishop Colenso, an author whom Mr. Watts ought to respect, says : “ It is perfectly consistent with the most entire and sincere belief in our Lord’s divinity to hold, as many do, that when He vouchsafed to become a Son of Man, He took our nature fully, and voluntarily entered into all the conditions of humanity, and, among

others, into that which makes our growth in all ordinary knowledge gradual and limited " ("On the Pentateuch," part 1, page xxxi.). (3) "Was it a part of Christ's mission to judge the world?" Certainly, but not then. His first coming was not as a judge. His second will be; hence there is no discrepancy in the texts. (4) "At Saul's conversion did his attendants hear the voice there spoken of?" Yes; but they did not understand it. Every student of the Greek New Testament knows that the Apostle uses the verb *akouein*, to hear, in the same sense in Acts ix. 7 as its corresponding Hebrew verb is often employed in the Old Testament—viz., to understand. We have a good illustration of this meaning in 1 Cor. xiv. 2. "For no man understandeth [*akouei*] him." The Apostle therefore says, in Acts xxii. 9, not that his companions did not *hear* the voice, but that they did not *know* what was said. These men were probably Hellenists, and did not understand Aramaic, in which dialect the Lord spoke to Paul. (5) Can all men be saved? Yes; but all will not. The "strong delusions" come upon those only "who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." They deliberately chose error, and God gave them their fill of what they had chosen. This is not an arbitrary act on the part of Deity, but the working of His eternal laws. (6) Will all sin be ultimately forgiven? The very text quoted says there is one sin which shall not be forgiven. Mr. Watts wishes me to explain what that sin is. But such an explanation can form no part of this debate, and is not called for by the subject under consideration. 7. Are there any righteous persons? Absolutely, no, yet relatively some are called righteous. It would be quite correct to say that no man was absolutely moral—that is, who had never done an immoral act; yet we speak, and correctly, of moral men. (8) Are we to hate our brethren? In the evil sense of hating, "He who hateth his brother is a murderer." But the word is used in Scripture in the sense of loving less (*vide* Genesis xxix. 30, 31). The Hebrews compared a strong love with a weaker by using the term *love* for one and *hate* to describe the other. In the text quoted by Mr. Watts a man is required to hate his own life (or soul, for so it is in the original), which sufficiently shows the relative sense in which the word is

used. (9) Was Christ sent to save the world? Yes; but in the presence of those who rejected His teaching, made light of His claims, refused to believe in His mission, and preferred darkness to light, He spake in parables so that they should not understand. So much for my opponent's string of Biblical contradictions.

Mr. Watts complains that there are some parts of his letter which I have not answered. I would suggest that he had better leave that matter to the reader. As far as I can see, I have replied to every argument that he has advanced, except some few which I deemed perfectly irrelevant. In any case, if I have omitted anything, he can state it again, as I have done in several cases in reference to points which I thought he had overlooked.

MR. WATTS'S FOURTH LETTER.

DR. SEXTON intimates that I lag behind in this debate. He must assuredly have observed that up to the present, in my review of his positions, not one of his allegations has escaped my notice. Can the Doctor say the same? He may rest assured that I will answer every charge he urges against Secularism, and also, to the best of my ability, expose the fallacies of his orthodox positions. The following are the questions that have been submitted to Dr. Sexton in my previous letters to which he has not hitherto replied:—(1) Christianity enjoins uniformity of opinion; Secularism allows difference of opinion on speculative subjects: which, therefore, is the better system of the two? (2) Can Dr. Sexton show that any difference of opinion exists among Secularists upon the seven principles given in the first paragraph of my second letter? (3) Does Christianity teach that those persons who have examined its principles, and who reject them, shall in consequence be punished after death? (4) What good is there in Christianity that a Secularist cannot avail himself of without subscribing to the Christian creeds? (5) Are not the inducements to belief in Christianity, as mentioned in the quotations from the New Testament given in the last paragraph but two of my second letter, “intensely selfish?” (6) Can Dr. Sexton produce from Secular writers such damaging testimony against reason and experience as authorities as that which I have adduced from professing Christian writers, in the first paragraph in my third letter, against the Bible as an infallible “court of appeal”? (7) In the eighth paragraph of my first letter it is alleged that Mr. Mill, in his “Essay on Nature,” furnishes an argument against the assumption that God, if he were the author of nature

made it perfect. Will my opponent notice this allegation ? (8) Although the question has been twice asked, What is the "religious sentiment" or "feeling?" no explanation has been given. In his last letter Dr. Sexton says : " Mr. Watts seems determined not to deal with it." When my opponent has stated what the "religious sentiment" or "feeling" is, it will be my duty to show its relation, if it has any, to Secularism. (9) Dr. Sexton has been asked to prove (a) that national progress is the result of aught else but the devotion of man's principal attention to the things of "time;" and (b) that such attention renders a person less fit for any possible "eternity." Let the Doctor successfully do this, and he will then have secured an advantage for Christianity; if, however, he cannot do so, I claim a superiority in this particular for Secularism, inasmuch as such principal devotion is one of its fundamental principles. (10) Is it not a fact that during the Middle Ages, when the Christian Church was supreme and in the zenith of its power, it persistently opposed science and the diffusion of education ? (11) Is it a necessary part of Christianity to believe in the Bible description of its Deity; that Christ's death redeemed the world from the supposed effects of the alleged fall of Adam; that the Devil is a person, and that hell is a place of everlasting torture ? (12) Who is the Holy Ghost, and what constitutes blasphemy against him or it? Instead of answering these questions, my opponent persists in introducing fresh matter, forgetting apparently that he has not only to attack Secularism, but that he has also to show that Christianity is superior. Now, in my second letter several passages were cited from the New Testament showing wherein its teachings are opposed to the secular welfare of society; to these the Doctor has not even referred. Until my twelve questions are answered and the passages mentioned noticed, it must be evident to the reader that Dr. Sexton "lags behind in this debate."

After this brief explanation—rendered necessary by my opponent's charge of my being backward in meeting his positions in this debate—I proceed with my examination of Dr. Sexton's arguments. He says that the differences among Christians do not affect fundamental doctrines. Is this so? I thought that the Fall of Man,

the Atonement, the conditions of salvation, the existence of the Devil, the nature and duration of the future punishments, and the authority of the New Testament were "fundamental doctrines." It has been shown in this debate that upon all these points differences among Christians obtain. My quotations from the Rev. Dr. Irons prove the very object for which I cited them—namely, that it is impossible to obtain from the New Testament one concise system. If I am wrong, surely my opponent can show it from Dr. Irons's works.

Dr. Sexton asks if the Secular "court of appeal" means the reason and experience of universal man or only a portion of mankind? My answer is, it includes the result of all of whom we have any knowledge, both past and present, who have laboured for the improvement of mankind. "Why," the Doctor asks, "should this be the standard of truth?" Because, by reason and experience we decide what is true and what is false. However opposed to reason and experience, can Christianity show us any better guides than these? if so what?

Dr. Sexton says "this debate is not of a doctrinal but of a practical character." It is both. Why does my opponent seek to avoid Christian doctrines? Are they indefensible? If so, let him candidly say so. When I asked, What is Christianity? the reply was, "Whatever is contained in the New Testament." Very well, then, I find that certain doctrines are taught in the New Testament, and these my opponent is called upon to defend, or else to admit that as a Christian advocate he is unable to do so. He has shown his readiness to refer to doctrines when he thinks it suits his purpose—hence his introduction of the freedom of the will. In one of his works on Secularism Dr. Sexton says that one of the first questions to be asked a Secular advocate is what there is in the doctrines that he has to teach ("Fallacies of Secularism," p. 8). It is, therefore, my duty to inquire of my opponent what there is in his doctrines that he has to teach.

By the term "Theistic Humanitarianism" is meant that form of Theism which supposes a God in whom there are no attributes antagonistic to humane ideas.

What does Dr. Sexton mean by human morality being

the outcome of love to God, and upon what passages in the New Testament does he rely to prove that it is a part of Christianity? The teaching is an objectionable one, as I shall show hereafter when dealing with alleged Bible teachings.

In the phrase "Religion of Humanity" the term religion is used in its etymological sense, as holding fast to the principles of humanity apart from all forms of theology, as the Positivists do. It is possible for any form of Theism which is based upon the supposition that the first and highest duty to God is service to man to coincide with Secularism. I have fully dealt with this point on page 13 of my "Secularism in its Various Relations." Will Dr. Sexton give me his authority for saying that I once held the opinion that Secularism was Atheism?

I have already, in my first two letters, stated what, in my opinion, are the guarantees of morality, and Dr. Sexton's algebraical question in no way refutes my position. His splitting up the co-efficient of one side of the equation cannot place the equation in *reductio ad absurdum*. Besides, he has not shown that the side of the equation does not contain the quantities Mr. Holyoake alleges it does. Nay, more; he admits that the one quantity is naturally involved or "included" in the other. Of course, the only real moral guide is in human nature; and in my previous letter I have shown in what part, and how it could be made available in every-day life. The nature which Mr. Mill declared to be immoral was that which had not been modified and improved by man. If morality is not in nature, where is it, and how can we recognise it? If we do not decide a moral act by the aid of reason and experience, what is the agency employed for this purpose? Is it not my opponent's reason and experience that enable him to discuss this ethical question on the present occasion? "Who is to decide what is beneficial to mankind?" What is the tribunal appealed to now? Not the Bible, but society. This may not be perfect; but where is there a better one? Our duty is to improve that tribunal by supplying it with facts and strengthening its intellectual status. Who are the persons included in the "our"? Every member of society who is in a position to add to its

general welfare. As to the allegation that I substituted the word "duty" for protection, really there was no substitution at all, inasmuch as duty was involved in my first statement, wherein I speak of the debt man owes to the community.

According to my opponent, the source of moral obligation is the holiness of God, and, in a secondary sense, the moral nature which he has given to man. It is to be hoped that the sense of this definition is as clear to Dr. Sexton as it is obscure to myself. I would ask, however, what is the "holiness of God," and why it should be correlated to man's moral duty? If God were—for argument sake—unholy, would his unholiness be also the source and standard of human morality? Again, he alleges that "a moral act is that which harmonises with the will of God and, *à fortiori*, with the eternal laws of right and wrong." Will Dr. Sexton define what the will of God is and whence a knowledge of it is derived, also what are the "eternal laws of right and wrong," and how can any man of finite intelligence know that they are eternal? "The sanctions of morality are found in the revelation which God has given of his will to man." In what part of the revelation are they found, and will Dr. Sexton name those sanctions? "The incentives to moral conduct are the desire to develop our highest spiritual powers conformably to the will of God." Such a definition as this may mean anything or nothing. What are our spiritual powers, as distinct from the material ones, and how can they be developed? Moreover, how does God wish them to be developed, and how can we ascertain his undoubted desires on this point?

The statement that "immorality and licentiousness never were manifested by Christians, but only by persons who bore the Christian name," is a painfully transparent endeavour to shunt the acknowledgment that for hundreds of years the Christian religion failed to effect a noticeable improvement in human morals. It is absurd for grown men to argue in this manner. If those who practised immorality were not the Christians of their day, can Dr. Sexton tell us of the real Simon Pures, the genuine articles, who openly protested against the evil lives and practices of those who bore the Christian name

and held high offices in the Christian Church? As a divine system given by and through God, this religion should have made immorality impossible among believers; why, we ask, did it notoriously fail to do so?

It is quite true, as Mr. Ross stated, that in this country Christian practice and Secular theory are identical, and herein lies an inconsistency of the Christians, for, if they acted up to the passages (mentioned in a previous letter) of the New Testament, this identity would be impossible.

Dr. Sexton says all Secularists are Necessitarians. Will he have the goodness to explain what he understands by Necessitarianism? Does he mean that a man has no power to choose or determine how he will act? If so, all Secularists are not Necessitarians. Of course, if there were *no* power to choose, there would be no moral act; hence I object to the Christian doctrine of Predestination, and to those passages in the New Testament which speak of "the elect," and which affirm that man of himself can do no good thing.

It would be interesting to know how faith in God can enhance the value of science. All science is secular, and entirely independent of theology.

When we assert that improvement is to be effected by material means, we intend to convey that the progress of mankind can be secured independently of all so-called spiritual ones. These means of course include the proper use of every intellectual faculty.

It is quite true that persecution belongs to human nature, but Christianity should have rendered persecution impossible, at least among professing Christians themselves. The difference between Secularism and Christianity upon this point is, that in no Secular publication is persecution recommended, while in the New Testament incentives to acts of intolerance are distinctly given, and history shows that these have only too literally been fulfilled.

I am asked a question upon absolute morality. Apart from man and his ultimate benefit, I do not think there is any other than a mere ideal, transcendental morality. The true moral test I take to be the highest advantage of man individually and socially, and the moral sense has been evolved and developed in regular

ratio with the general development of the race. My opponent asks, "Is man a responsible being?" This will depend upon what meaning Dr. Sexton attaches to the word responsible, and to whom that responsibility is due.

With respect to conscience not being the ultimate guide in life, and Dr. Sexton's desire to know what is this guide, I reply briefly that man's only reliable monitor is the intellect. So long as this does its duty and its behests are obeyed, so long will man's conduct be in accordance with the requirements of the moral standard of the age, as directed to the promotion of man's highest welfare.

I notice with satisfaction my opponent's acknowledgment that the moral precepts of Christianity "may be old." They are so, and thus it follows that, so far as morality is concerned, the world could have done excellently well without the Christian religion, which confessedly brought no new morality. As to the "method" being its own, I distinctly deny the accuracy of this statement if it be intended to convey the idea that Jesus was the only moral teacher who claimed to have a divine mission. But, even if it were true that the Christian method were peculiar, this proves nothing, since Secularism claims also to have a method of its own, and I cannot allow of any begging of the question at issue in this discussion.

Dr. Sexton's attempted reconciliation of the Biblical contradictions mentioned by me is amusing in the extreme. The same method, if carried into the critical examination of any system, would "explain away" a thousand contradictions, and render things antithetically opposed to each other easy of reconciliation. My opponent's "Difficulties Made Easy" system consists in introducing new meanings for the words used in the New Testament, and in having recourse to his own private and individual system of explanation, paying little or no regard to what the majority of professing Christians have always been led to believe. If every reader be suffered to exercise his own judgment in deciding the New Testament writers' meaning, what becomes of the New Testament as a court of appeal respecting the alleged revealed will of the Deity? However, in a future letter I shall deal fully with Bible contradictions.

With reference to the contention that Christianity revealed a future life, it will suffice here to say that the doctrine of immortality existed long before Christ was heard of, although it must be confessed that the Christian religion added greatly to the horrors of the belief by introducing tortures which "no mind can conceive without terror, nor contemplate without dismay."

In conclusion, I must correct Dr. Sexton's assertion that I am not content with Utilitarianism as an ethical standard. On the contrary, I fully and unreservedly accept it as such, not because I think it absolutely faultless, but because I do not entertain any doubt respecting its incomparable practical superiority as a basis of ethics over the system which reposes its ethical guarantees upon the alleged will of God.

DR. SEXTON'S FIFTH LETTER.

THE statement of Mr. Watts, that he has answered all my allegations against Secularism, is certainly astounding. In my first letter I raised three distinct issues. Two of these he has completely shunted aside, and the third is left in such inextricable confusion that it presents a perfect labyrinth through which it is impossible to thread one's way. What about the question of Atheism? In my last I showed that Mr. Bradlaugh has stated distinctly that Secularism is Atheism. Mr. Watts says it is not. But I must repeat my oft-asked question, Why am I to accept one Secular teacher in preference to another when they disagree? Moreover, Mr. Watts himself once held that Mr. Bradlaugh was right, and I suppose he was as good a Secularist then as he is now. He asks for my authority for making this statement. Here it is. He wrote eleven years ago as follows: "Does it not prove that when Secular principles are reasoned out Mr. Bradlaugh's position is the correct one, that the logical definition of Secularism is Atheism?" (*National Reformer*, March 27th, 1870). Since then my opponent has clearly changed his opinion, to which I can have no objection; only he must show that the logical definition of Secularism now is not Atheism, or be content to have it said that he accepts an illogical definition, and that his present views are not "reasoned out." Then I quoted Mr. Stewart Ross—an able Secular writer—in my last, to show that Mr. Watts's Secularism is not Secularism at all in the true sense of the word, but a kind of small imitation of Christianity; and how is this met? My opponent's reply is ingenious, but hardly ingenuous. It shows the "inconsistency of the Christian," he says. But what if it does? That is no answer. Mr. Ross

wrote, not to show the inconsistency of Christians, but to point out the utter uselessness of British Secular Union Secularism. He asks, and I should like his question answered, "What justification can it [Mr. Watts's Secularism] plead for its existence, for its galvanic counterfeit of genuine vitality?" Then, on the other hand, Mr. Holyoake, as I showed, says that "Secularism does not question the pretensions of Christianity." This is not answered. And yet it is so vital a point that the whole debate hinges upon it; for if Secularism does not question the pretensions of Christianity, Mr. Watts should retire from the discussion. Again, I ask, what is the *raison d'être* of Secularism? All that it inculcates Christians practise, so says Mr. Ross; therefore it is not wanted. It does not question the pretensions of Christianity, so says Mr. Holyoake; therefore its mission is not to overthrow Christianity. What, then, does it purpose to do? What justification can it plead for its existence?

I am asked whether I can show any difference of opinion among Secularists upon the seven "principles" already given. I reply:—1. It is unimportant whether I can or not, as I have shown grave differences upon subjects of equal moment. 2. These so-called principles can no more form a rule of life by themselves than can the multiplication table. 3. Most assuredly Secularists do differ upon some of these very questions—No. 6 for example, as I have shown in my last letter. Anent these same "principles," I have already asked some questions which I should like answered—that, for example, as to what is meant by "material means alone," which Secularists talk so much about; and whether the "help from prayer or from providence," and the "availability of Supernatural aid," which Mr. Holyoake considers may be included in Secularism, form a portion of the "material means."

The one point which Secularism seems to pride itself on is the right to hold any opinions to which a man's judgment may lead him. This is paraded in various forms in Mr. Watts's previous letters, and lies at the root of several of his thirteen Secular characteristics. Now, I shall be glad to be informed whether Secularists will really stand by this. Take the following case. A man uses his reason,

and exercises his judgment to the best of his ability, and as a result conscientiously arrives at the conclusion that Christianity is true: is he, after this, a Secularist? If not, the talk about liberty and Freethought is a sham, and only tolerated as long as the "free thinker" arrives at conclusions settled for him beforehand by the Secular authorities.

In my last, I asked how there could be any right or liberty or moral act where there is no freedom of the will. In reply to this, Mr. Watts asks me to explain what I understand by Necessitarianism? The word is unimportant. I gave two quotations—one from Mr. Bradlaugh, and another from Mr. Holyoake: will Mr. Watts tell me whether the doctrine taught in them is compatible with any kind of freedom? If these are not deemed sufficient to prove that Secularism recognises no power in man to act other than he is compelled by forces over which he has no control, I can give more. And if man be so compelled to act, what becomes of all the tall-talk about liberty and freedom, etc.? Let me have a distinct answer to this question.

Then as to the moral law. I maintain that this has not been as yet defined. In my third letter I named five sources of morals recognised by Mr. Holyoake, and I asked Mr. Watts to differentiate these. I must again request him to do this. They may all be true sources of morals, but I want to know how far any one may be separated from the others, and what is the special value of each and the sum of the value of the whole? Mr. Watts replies to the equation I gave as follows: "Dr. Sexton's algebraical question in no way refutes my position." Refutes his position! I don't know what the position is. It is of that I am in search, and I stated the equation, not to refute anything, but to show Mr. Watts what his task was. He adds: "His splitting up of the co-efficient of one side of the equation cannot place the equation in *reductio ad absurdum*." Well, I suppose there is some profound meaning in this sentence, but I must confess myself unable to discover it. Splitting up the co-efficient! Why, I did the very reverse. But even if I had not, the splitting up, if any there was, assuredly was not mine, but Mr. Holyoake's, for all the terms were taken from his writings. But I want the equation dealt with,

in order that I may learn what and where is the Secularist's moral guide. "The one quality," says Mr. Watts, "is naturally involved or included in the other." I know that, and this is just the reason why I want them differentiated, or struck out of the equation. The conflicting views about nature and conscience prevailing among Secularists, I have already pointed out. I ask again how, if nature has to be improved and conscience educated, either of them can be a moral guide, since to improve and educate presupposes a standard by which such improvement and education can be measured and regulated?

In my last letter I asked—(1) Is there such a thing as absolute morality? (2) Is man a responsible being? I am answered: "Apart from man and his ultimate benefit I do not think there is any other than a mere ideal transcendent morality." This is surely saying that there is an "ideal transcendent morality" somewhere apart from man. I shall be glad to be informed where it is. Clearly, however, Mr. Watts, from the remaining portion of his answer, does not believe in an absolute morality; consequently, that which is moral to-day may become immoral to-morrow. This point I shall return to hereafter. As to the responsibility, he asks what I mean by it and to whom it is due. Surely the meaning of the word responsibility is well enough known—it is often used by Secularists themselves. To whom it is due formed no part of my question, which was a general one. Is it due at all to any one? When this is answered, I will make the application of the reply.

The Secular "Court of Appeal" is not yet satisfactorily defined. Mr. Watts says that "it includes the result of all of whom we have any knowledge, both past and present, who have laboured for the good of mankind." Yes; but—(1) What is the standard by which the "good of mankind" is to be estimated? (2) Who is to be the judge of what is conducive to that good? (3) What Court is to decide as to the persons who have thus laboured and the meritorious character of their labours? The whole thing seems to me to be enveloped in the greatest obscurity. The Court of Appeal lies in the "results"—that is, I suppose, the actions, of those who have worked for the good of mankind, and the good of mankind is to be judged of by these results. This

looks amazingly like arguing in a circle. A Secular writer in Mr. Watts's own journal escapes all the difficulty by a very short cut. He says: "A man's morals, like his opinions, are his own affair, and Presidents, Secretaries, and Committees are not competent to sit in judgment in such matters. A censorship like this is fatal to a *free* Society" (Mr. W. Lewin, *Secular Review*, April 13th, 1878). Now, this view is understandable, at all events. There is no moral law but such as a man makes for himself, and no one else has any right to interfere with him: his actions, like his opinions, are *free*—perhaps sometimes a little too *free*.

The questions on the list with which Mr. Watts opens his last letter have most of them been answered already, and some which have not are perfectly irrelevant to this debate—such, for example, as that relating to the sin against the Holy Ghost. I will notice the rest. "What good is there in Christianity which a Secularist cannot avail himself of without subscribing to the Christian creeds?" I have said nothing about creeds. But it must be clear to every one that for a Secularist to avail himself of Christianity—*i.e.*, its spiritual power, its divine life, its holy influence from above—he must become a Christian. Perhaps I should not use these terms to an opponent who had not once been a professed Christian himself; but Mr. Watts has, and he knows, therefore, what I mean. What is the religious sentiment? That aspiration after somewhat or some-one higher than man, which prompts to worship in all ages and in every land. I do not care what Mr. Watts calls this: will he account for the fact that worship is universal? Even those who do not profess to believe in a God feel themselves compelled to-day to resort to some substitute for worship; hence the "Cosmic Emotion" of Professor Clifford and the worship of abstract humanity of the Positivists. Why, a well-known Atheist in Mr. Watts's own journal some time ago proposed that Secularists should pray (*vide Secular Review*, April 5th, 1879), and those lines which once appeared in the *National Reformer* deifying Mr. Bradlaugh we have not forgotten:—

"Of Him we are the volunteers,
With all our Freethought bands;

And Theists, if you'll have a god,
Hail one where Bradlaugh stands."

The universal practice of worship proves a want in human nature, imaginary or real. How does Secularism propose to deal with it? I have asked this question more than once in the present debate. I am requested to prove that national progress is not the result of man's devotion to the things of time. Why should I do anything of the kind? What I contend for is that Christianity enjoins attention to the things of time, that all its duties lie in this world, and that all progress in modern days has been effected by men and women influenced by Christian principles. What has Secularism ever done for man in the way of progress during the thirty years that it has been in existence? It has built no schools, founded no charities, imparted no instruction in matters of science or general knowledge. In fact, Mr. Holyoake decries knowledge. He says: "The world does not want to know more; it knows already much more than it acts out" (Debate with the Rev. Brewin Grant, p. 5). And Mr. Foote well remarks, in reference to Secular benevolence: "Christian and Jew shame us when we compare our respective charities. I know I may be censured for speaking thus plainly, but I am, nevertheless, sure that truth, even if disagreeable, is profitable to every man. He who will not utter it is a hypocrite, and he who will not listen to it is a coward or a fool. The fact stands plain and palpable, that we Secularists, although lavish enough in protestations of general benevolence, are not conspicuous practisers of it in particular; a great many of us seem quite content with gratifying our charitable instincts through the medium of speech, instead of through the medium of action."—"Secular Work and Organisation, p. 17." What else can be expected from a creed of negations and a rule of life whose basis is selfishness? Men do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles. The question as to what Christianity has done for the world I must leave for the present. It shall be dealt with before the debate closes. I fear to make this letter too long. With reference to what doctrines it is necessary for a Christian to believe in, I reply all those that are taught in the New Testament. I have said this before.

Why does not my opponent refer to the Book for the doctrines that he names, instead of giving a string of dogmas which may or may not be found there?

For the second time, Mr. Watts misrepresents me by making me say that faith in God enhances the value of science. I have said nothing of the kind, and I have corrected this error before.

The question as to which part of the New Testament teaches that morality is an outcome of love to God has been already answered. I shall be glad to be informed in what sense the so-called "Religion of Humanity" is a religion at all. My opponent refers to the Positivists, but they worship. Is Mr. Watts prepared to defend their practice in this respect?

In a previous letter Mr. Watts asked me how I knew anything about a future life. I answered, from Revelation. Now he says that the doctrine of immortality was taught before Christ. I reply, so much the better for my position, and so much the worse for his. For that widespread belief has to be accounted for and explained.

Mr. Watts clearly misunderstands what is meant by "method" in a moral system. I repeat that the "method" of Christian ethics was new. And this has nothing to do with the "divine mission of Jesus," but is a perfectly distinct question.

Whether my explanation of so-called Biblical discrepancies satisfies my friend or not concerns me but little. He should, however, remember that the ablest men that the world has seen, the brightest intellects that have appeared in the ages, the most critical and logical portion of mankind, the men whose erudition surpassed that of all their fellows, have seen no real contradictions in the Bible, but have held it to be the Word of God without any mixture of error, sufficient for life, and all-sufficient in death.

MR. WATTS'S FIFTH LETTER.

It must not be overlooked that this debate is one on the comparative merits of Secularism and Christianity : it is not sufficient, therefore, for my opponent to show that Secularism is imperfect ; he should prove that Christianity is the superior system. I have mentioned this point before, but little notice has been taken of it. If this debate is to be thorough, it should be a discussion of principles, and not a continual urging of repetitions of the differences existing among Freethinkers. These differences are no argument against Secularism, inasmuch as uniformity of opinion upon all positions is not required. Can Dr. Sexton mention any fundamental principles upon which Secularists differ ? I have already named several cardinal doctrines of orthodox Christianity upon which, among its adherents, there is a decided lack of agreement. In my last letter twelve questions were asked my opponent : he has not even noticed seven of them at all, and the five he referred to were dealt with in a most unique style. Why is the question respecting the Holy Ghost irrelevant ? Is it not a part of Christianity ? and are we not told that if we blaspheme against it we are never to be forgiven either in this or in any other world ? Surely, therefore, Dr. Sexton ought to be in a position to say something about it.

In previous letters I have stated the principles of Secularism, its ethics, and their bases and incentives, and my opponent's objections to them have been noticed. Before dealing with the few points in Dr. Sexton's last letter requiring notice, I must press for an answer to the questions above referred to ; also for an explanation as to what is meant by "holiness of God," the "will of God ;" in what part of Revelation are the moral sanctions

to be found? and what are "spiritual powers," and how do they act as "moral incentives"? and, furthermore, where do we learn what is "God's wish" as to their development? As these moral agencies are put forward in opposition to the Secular ethical code, it will be an advantage to have their nature and authority clearly stated. When this has been done, Dr. Sexton's last letter shall be fairly dealt with. In the meantime, with a view to make the present debate one of principle and not merely one of words, I will proceed further in expounding the reasons which induce me to regard Secularism as being superior to Christianity. The requirements of mankind may be classed as follows—namely, health, happiness, knowledge, progress, and wealth, the last-mentioned signifying not superfluity, but sufficiency, so far as the wants and comforts of each individual are concerned. If it be true, as Dr. Sexton is careful to inform us (see his first letter), that "Christianity is contained in the New Testament," then I maintain that such Christianity is not suited to meet the wants of mankind, inasmuch as the New Testament does not provide for the above five requirements of the human race. With respect to health, we find various well-known students of social science (as was recently done in the city of Exeter) attributing the terrible periodical epidemics which swept over Europe in the Middle Ages entirely to the then universal neglect throughout Christendom of sanitary laws. This neglect was the natural, or at least inevitable, consequence of the *bonâ fide* acceptance of the belief that men were pilgrims upon earth, whose ultimate bourne was a life beyond the grave; that they were but as sojourners in a hostelry, whose chief aim and object was to arrive safely in Paradise when their weary earthly pilgrimage was at an end. Hence it followed that, while the Saracens and the Jews were remarkable for personal cleanliness and frequent ablutions, outside the Saracen dominions and the walls of Constantinople—after the conquest of that city by the Osmanli—such a thing as a bath was unknown throughout Christendom. Health depends upon the observance of certain physical laws—laws which the Christians confessedly neglected, doubtless in pure ignorance, since neither the New Testament nor its then recognised expounders insisted that it was

man's duty to be clean in his person and in his surroundings. It is not denied that Christians in the present age display an anxiety in this respect ; but, then, such solicitude is due, not to their Christianity, but to the fact that science—sanitary science—has clearly shown that disease and death are the natural results of allowing the law of cleanliness to be neglected as it was for centuries among Christians.

My opponent cannot allege that Europeans were dirty in the Middle Ages because up to that period Christianity had not had sufficient time to exert its beneficial influence upon the people, inasmuch as no one knows better than Dr. Sexton that the ancient Greeks and Romans were not ignorant of sanitation, that they were remarkable in their attachment to and use of the bath. Moreover, the ancient Hebrews, the adherents of that Mosaism *which was not and is not Christianity*, were excessively (almost finically) clean in their daily life, as were the Assyrians, the Egyptians, and all the Polytheistic races of antiquity. Whence, then, comes the extraordinary fact that Christian Europe was so neglectful of personal and domestic cleanliness, except it was the natural outcome of the belief that "to be conformed to this world," and to "mind the things of the flesh" with any solicitude would be to imperil the safety of the soul? There can be no verbal quibbling over the plain records of history, and these clearly and unmistakably assure us that during many centuries the Christian world never even cared to observe and study physical laws with the view of improving man's position, but that it placed above all other considerations the supposed duty of reliance upon the Deity and the exercise of faith.

As it has already been intimated, modern Christians avail themselves of sanitary science, but my opponent will bear in mind that such science is wholly Secular. That Christianity will *permit* him this latitude may be true enough, but every candid person will note that Secularism *encourages* man to study the fixed laws of his environment, because his welfare in a great degree depends upon his knowing so much of these laws as to be able to regulate his actions in conformity to them. So far, therefore, as our health is concerned, the matter stands thus : Christianity, very late in its history, and with much reluctance, foregoes the "gospel of dirt," while Secularism

has from the first, and by the mouth of all its teachers, striven to instruct men in the necessity of studying and obeying those physical laws upon which the health of the individual and of society depends.

The second requirement placed in my category is that of happiness, by which is meant the supreme welfare of the human race. While no doubt Christianity does, in its own peculiar method and by its own teachings, insist upon this, yet to me it appears certain that it has altogether misrepresented the matter, and set its adherents upon a wrong and vicious path by making man's highest happiness consist in the attainment of the "kingdom of God," by enjoining man to "seek first" that hypothetical and shadowy something or nothing, and by making even his sublunary welfare dependent upon its attainment. This is a vicious system, not because it leads to what is ordinarily termed immoral practices, but vicious in the sense that it has conduced to the formation or retention of certain fundamental notions which have stood directly in the way of human progress. One such notion is that of the efficacy of prayer in influencing the course of events and in moulding human destiny. Science teaches that material effects are the product of certain commensurate physical causes, and that where the cause exists the effect must follow, despite either prayers or protestations, tears or fastings. For more than eighteen hundred years Christians have petitioned their assumed Divinity to "deliver us from evil," to "give us our daily bread," to "lead us not into temptation," with what effect let the historical student determine when he reads of the universal rapine, sensuality, and the almost no less general destitution of the necessities of life which prevailed during the period appropriately called the Dark Ages.

Christianity has failed in the past because its theory of happiness is inherently fallacious and absurd. Let us suppose that prayer was answered, that the orthodox Christian should awake one morning upon a regenerated world—that is to say, on the Christian idea of regeneration, upon a world convinced of sin and reconciled to the Deity. Where would then be the stimulus to exertion? Law and Legislature there would then be none; the very mainsprings of progress would be arrested, since nature would be all one-sided, and the very ideas of want, of

sin, of virtue, would be lost sight of, and but one kind of action would be known. Man's happiness, however, cannot thus be attained. As the gardener has to combat the weeds, so ambi-dexterous Nature furnishes us with incentives to exertion in making exertion necessary. We do not want stagnation, but the incentive to active, good-producing life.

Our third requirement, knowledge, has been persistently and consistently opposed by Christians, who have thus acted in obedience to what they regarded as their duty. I need not here give samples of this, since my opponent must know that science (knowledge) has met with continuous opposition and retardation from Christian theologians. If Dr. Sexton affirms that in thus acting they contravened the spirit of Christianity, I would inquire of him how is he able so to affirm? Had he existed when Galileo was brought before the ecclesiastical authorities, what portion of Scripture would he have urged to show them their folly? Had he participated in the struggle of Christians against the geologists, how would he have taught the religionists that they were in error in their views of the age of the earth? Could he have done so by the aid of the New Testament, much acerbity would have been prevented, and the Christian theory of revelation would have been less discredited than it now is.

With regard to progress, Christians can only accept the present standard of knowledge by tacitly ignoring the plain teachings of Jesus. Where, in the New Testament, do we even find a hint that those teachings were not to be too literally construed? Commenting on the words, "He who says to his brother More is in danger of hell fire," and "Sell that ye have, and give to the poor, and ye shall have treasure in heaven," Professor F. W. Newman says: "For a man to call himself a disciple of Christ, ought he not to consider what Jesus would have exacted of him if brought face to face? Imagine Mr. Greg saying to him: 'Lord, Lord, with reverence be it said, the literalism of thy teaching disfigures it; I have no intention of selling my goods..... but I try to penetrate boldly into the essence of thy meaning,' etc. Why, then, do not Christians boldly act up to the letter of the teachings of their Master? Simply

because doing so would involve a chaotic revolution in society, would overturn all things that are, and would conduce to such a confusion as the wildest Nihilist never contemplated. If the letter of the Bible kills, the spirit is misleading, inasmuch as it is not the spirit of our time. The prayer of faith does not heal the sick, and that which Jesus believed was diabolic possession is now universally recognised by physicians as epilepsy. The Bible is not in accord with the modern spirit; it fails, therefore, to meet modern requirements, and any system based upon it must necessarily be an utter anachronism.

The question for my opponent here to deal with is, not whether Christians do comply with the requirements given above, but whether they could do so if they acted up to the teachings of the passages in the New Testament mentioned in my previous letters?

One word in reference to my statement that wealth (sufficiency) is a human requirement. Certain it is that in practice few or no modern Christians manifest a repugnance to this position. Nevertheless, our modern enterprise and commercial eagerness have little in common with the economic maxims (if they merit the words) of Christ and his apostles. More than this, there is not in commerce any scope for the exercise of the renunciatory teachings of the Four Gospels. Trade is now conducted on the principles of book-keeping, and in its profit and loss account there is no line ever left open for the bestowal of every available balance on the poor.

Christianity is not suited to meet the wants of mankind, because its doctrines are based upon extraneous commands, which spring, not from human necessity, but from the will of an external Power. Secularism, on the contrary, obeys no commands but those of reason, and of those emotions whose promptings are sanctioned by the reason as being virtuous and beneficial. "If," says Miss Cobbe (in "Broken Lights"), an "historical religion be built on the sand, the sooner we learn it, ere the storms beat it down and overwhelm us in its fall, the safer we shall be." This does not involve the abnegation of those many excellent lessons of self-control and willing sacrifice which are to be found in the Bible, but rather their retention as being of great practical value in promoting happiness on all sides.

In concluding this lengthy letter, I would urge upon Dr. Sexton the consideration of the fact that Christianity has had nearly fifteen hundred years of active exercise in which to remodel and regenerate the world. Has it succeeded in so doing? The answer to this is its absolute condemnation. As Daniel said to Belshazzar, so says Secularism to the orthodox Christian: "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." We have no better test than that of experience, a test which must confound the Christian who boasts of the reforming and ameliorating influences of his religion. Man has patiently allowed himself to serve as the "vile body" of a huge alchemico-theologic experiment, the priest or revelation-expounder being the experimentalist, the world his alembic. Instead of transmuting the baser element into a superior substance, the result has been its deterioration. Instead of bringing peace, the orthodox Church brought strife, bloodshed, and misery; instead of bringing knowledge, it caused ignorance to exalt itself into a despotism; instead of proving a blessing to humanity, it has, as many believe, been a cruel malediction. Is this a past which ought to justify us in re-imposing such a system on the future? I think not. Slightly changing the words of Shakespeare, we can truly say of this impracticable system:—

"Its promises were, as it then was, mighty;
But its performance, as it is now, nothing."

DR. SEXTON'S SIXTH LETTER.

CHRISTIAN persecution is a solitary string on my opponent's fiddle, that he keeps on scraping away at in almost every letter, to such an extent that he bids fair soon to become a kind of Secularistic Paganini. Secularists don't persecute—not they. Here is a pamphlet, with Mr. Watts's own name on the title page, that I have before me, which is a strange comment on this delusive notion. In it he hurls the strongest epithets that he can command at the head of another Secular advocate—a quondam co-worker with himself—for his despotism, and the petty persecution by which he maintains his ascendancy over the minds of his followers. I am not about just now to quote from that *brochure*. Its contents are pretty well known to Secularists. But recently there happened, in my own experience, a circumstance which will illustrate admirably the Secularistic attitude towards persecution. A paragraph of a most mendacious and slanderous character respecting myself appeared in a scurrilous print, edited by a leader in this very liberal and very charitable movement. The supposed damage that the calumny would do me, if seen only by the readers of the paper, was not sufficient to satisfy the mud-pelting proclivities of a small band of traducers, who revel in moral garbage, and feast their souls on such offal as would disgust all noble-minded men. They consequently reprinted the paragraph in the form of a handbill, which they distributed to each person who came to hear a lecture that I was giving in their neighbourhood for the Christian Evidence Society. Now, men who would resort to so dirty a trick as this, to injure an opponent, are worse than those who presided over the Inquisition; and had they the power, they would send to the stake every antagonist of their views whose arguments

were too strong for them to answer. And the persons who were guilty of this mean, cowardly, and contemptible act comprise a branch of a so-called "National Secular Society," and issued their scurrilous production in its name. That some individuals professing Christianity may have, at some time or other, been guilty of conduct as base as this, I do not deny; but certain I am that no religious Society of the present day would sanction the act, much less be guilty of it. Let us hear no more nonsense about Christian persecution. As I said before, the persecuting spirit springs from the evil passions of human nature—that human nature which forms a factor in Mr. Holyoake's source of morals, though the exact value of the factor I have repeatedly requested Mr. Watts to tell me, but to no effect.

On perusing the last letter of Mr. Watts, I must confess to having experienced a good deal of astonishment. The line of argument taken would have served very well to open the debate with, had the opening devolved upon him; but coming as a reply to me, I really don't understand it. Is my fifth letter to be completely ignored? If the reader will turn to that letter, he will see that a large number of most important points are raised, which must be discussed, if this debate is to be made worth reading. But the whole thing is quietly passed over. Perhaps Mr. Watts intends to return to it at some future time; but then, the delay in doing so is like Irish obstruction in the House of Commons. The regular business is stopped, because Secularism is not as yet satisfactorily defined. Of what avail is it to tell me that Secularism permits this and prohibits that, until I am informed what Secularism is of itself. My opponent must surely see that the position I have maintained in these letters is, that Secularism is nothing at all. I am asked once more to point out "any fundamental principles upon which Secularists differ." Why, they differ upon everything worth naming, as I have already shown. And the differences are increased since I last wrote, for Mr. Holyoake's Leicester speech teaches Polytheism, if words have any meaning. Fundamental! Let Mr. Watts read again my last letter, and reply to the fundamental differences therein named.

What is the "holiness of God"? and what the "will of God"? Mr. Watts asks. By God I mean the One Eternal

Unconditioned, Infinite, Absolute Being, whose Divine wisdom planned, and whose Divine Power produced, all else. If Mr. Watts wants to know the meaning of such words as "holiness" and "will," he had better refer to a dictionary. The Christian moral sanctions I have already described. What are "spiritual powers," and how do they act as "moral incentives"? The development of man's spiritual nature, *i.e.*, that part of his nature which aspires after God, holds communion with Him, rejoices in His love, feels the influence of His spirit, cries out daily "Nearer, my God, to Thee," and longs for everlasting rest in the presence of the Holy One, is the highest incentive to morality known, because in the absence of morality such joys and aspirations are not possible. And all this is as clear to the true Christian as the ordinary experiences of his daily life. Where do we learn what is "God's wish" in regard to this? I have already said that the New Testament is the revelation of God's will, and in its pages, therefore, can be found full information as to what accords with the Divine Will. If Mr. Watts desires the passages, they can be given; but to quote them is assuredly unnecessary.

"The requirements of mankind," described in Mr. Watts's last—*viz.*, "health, happiness, knowledge, progress, and wealth"—look like a sort of political or social programme, and a part of his letter might have answered for an electioneering speech in his candidature at Hull. Has Secularism nothing to say upon the great and far higher questions that I have already brought forward? Even morality disappears from this last exposition of Secularism. But I want to know (1) where Secularism inculcates the principles now named, and (2) how it proposes to promote them. It is easy to say that Secularism does this or that, but, as it has no recognised text-book, how are we to know what it does, or proposes to do?

I. *Health*.—Under this heading, Mr. Watts has gone off into a long dissertation upon sanitary laws and cleanliness. And the inference we are expected to draw is, that Secularists are clean and Christians "dirty." Well, really now, this piece of information is so novel and so startling that it has nearly taken my breath away. I should never have dreamed that such was the case. I have seen a good many Freethinkers, both on the Continent and at

home, and I have had experience of hundreds of gatherings in Secular halls ; but it never occurred to me before that these people were so much cleaner than Christians. Does my friend mean this for a joke ? If so, I will laugh at it as becomes me. But, if he be serious, the statement is so astounding that I must have a little time to think about it. If Mr. Watts will take the trouble, when he has a Sunday morning to spare, to pay a visit to some church, and then compare the congregation he sees there, as to personal cleanliness, with a Sunday morning gathering at any Secular hall, I don't think that he will consider the former likely to suffer by the comparison. But where does Secularism enjoin cleanliness ? "Secularism," says Mr. Holyoake, "accepts no authority but that of nature." ("Principles of Secularism," p. 14). I shall be glad to be referred to the chapter and verse of that large volume which inculcates cleanliness. Mr. John Stuart Mill says : "Assuredly neither cleanliness nor the love of cleanliness is natural to man, but only the capacity of acquiring a love of cleanliness" ("Essay on Nature," p. 49). Strangely enough, Mr. Watts refers to the Jews as "remarkable for personal cleanliness and frequent ablutions." Exactly, and these practices they got from their Scriptures, and not from the Secular Bible, Nature. "Sanitary science," says Mr. Watts, "is wholly Secular." Of course it is, if by that be meant that it falls within the scope of man's secular life. So are all the precepts of Christianity. But this has as little to do with Mr. Watts's *ism* as with the integral calculus. Secular work and secular duties are very different from the imaginary thing called Secularism. As to health, the Founder of Christianity spent a great part of His time on earth in healing diseases and promoting health, so that the science of Medicine has ever since come to be looked upon as almost divine.

II. *Happiness*.—Secularism promotes happiness better than Christianity. Where is the proof ? To rejoice is a Christian duty and a Christian privilege. Nothing can be more conspicuous in the New Testament than the "joy" set before the believer, which he is enjoined to realise. On the other hand, Pessimism finds a resting place only in the breasts of unbelievers ; and Secularists not only complain bitterly of their sorrows, but they have

even recommended suicide as a remedy. The most brilliant writer that ever contributed to the pages of the *National Reformer* says: "Though the garden of thy life be wholly waste, the sweet flowers withered, the fruit trees barren, over its wall hang the rich dark clusters of the Vine of Death, within easy reach of thine hand, which may pluck them when it will" (*National Reformer*, March 22nd, 1874, p. 182.) Here is a pretty remedy for human misery. When failure comes, as come it will into most human lives, when disappointments arise and troubles ensue, the Secularist has no remedy but suicide, and must take refuge in the fearful crime of self-murder. And this is the system that professes to do so much for promoting happiness in the present life. It endeavours to blot out the hereafter and to escape from the present. The method that it proposes to adopt for making the best of the present life is to leap into the grave, and get out of existence altogether. The Secularistic Burial Service clearly recognises no happiness as having been enjoyed by those over whose remains it is read. Its words are: "In its presence [*i.e.*, death's] pain and care give place to rest and peace. The sorrow-laden and forlorn, the unfortunate and the despairing, find repose in the tomb; all the woes and ills of life are swallowed up in death" (p. 6). Thus Secularism makes life so destitute of happiness that death is a blessing. Under this head, in Mr. Watts's last letter, is a passage so curious that I transcribe it: "Let us suppose that prayer was answered, that the orthodox Christian should awake one morning upon a regenerated world—that is to say, on the Christian idea of regeneration, upon a world convinced of sin and reconciled to the Deity. Where would then be the stimulus to exertion? Law and legislature there would then be none; the very mainsprings of progress would be arrested, since nature would be all one-sided, and the very ideas of want, of sin, of virtue, would be lost sight of, and but one kind of action would be known." I confess myself quite unable to discern the gist of this. Does he mean that we are not to pray for the regeneration of mankind because, if our prayers were answered, and men became what they ought to be, there would be an end of exertion? If so, then neither ought we to labour to bring about a perfect

state of society for the same reason. What the "one kind of action" is that would alone be known in such a case, I cannot guess; nor do I know why there cannot be progress in "one kind of action" as easily as in a dozen. If Mr. Watts had been writing on the other side, he could not have given a better reason why pain and misery are permitted by God. From his standpoint I really do not see what he is aiming at.

III. *Knowledge*.—This, we are told, has been opposed by Christians. I reply, it has invariably been promoted by Christians. Nearly every great discovery has been made by a Christian man, influenced by Christian truth. Galileo—whose case is always quoted as though he had been a Sceptic—was a Christian. So were Copernicus, Kepler, Boyle, Newton, Bacon, Herschell (father and son), Dalton, Agassiz, Priestley, and a hundred others. Harvey owed his discovery of the circulation of the blood to the doctrine of final causes, which he held. But, says Mr. Watts, if Christians do act in this way, they do not follow the New Testament. I do not think that Christians are likely to go to Mr. Watts for an exposition of their Scriptures. They themselves see no incompatibility between a devotion to scientific discovery and the texts quoted, and they are far better judges of the matter than any Sceptic can possibly be, for they have made it the study of their lives. On the other hand, I should like the following questions answered:—1. Where does Secularism enjoin knowledge? Mr. Holyoake, as I showed in my last letter, condemns it. 2. What are the Secularistic agencies for promoting knowledge at present in operation? 3. What has Secularism ever done in the way of increasing the general stock of knowledge?

IV. *Progress*.—This word requires defining. Progress, I take it, means a moving in the direction of some ideal place or state, which it is desirable to reach. From the Secularistic standpoint, then, I ask to be informed—1. What is the ideal state that progress implies? 2. Why is it desirable to reach it? 3. How has a knowledge of it been obtained? 4. Where in Secularism is progress towards this ideal enjoined? 5. What is there in Secularism adapted to accomplish the end had in view? 6. What has Secularism done practically towards helping society in this onward movement? When these questions

are answered, I think it will not be difficult to show that all true human progress depends on Christianity.

V. *Wealth*.—What this has to do with the subject under discussion I really am at a loss to imagine. Does Secularism propose to make everybody rich? If so, how? And what is wealth? It signifies, “not superfluity, but sufficiency, so far as the wants and comforts of each individual are concerned.” Just so; but men’s wants are so various. One man can live upon a small income, because his wants are few, and another includes in the category of wants a great many things which both my opponent and myself would deem extravagant luxuries. Who is to be the judge, therefore, on this score? But assuredly all this is beside the question at issue. We might as well discuss the price of coal, the quality of turtle soup, or the latest fashion in ladies’ bonnets. Mr. Watts says that modern Christians manifest no repugnance to getting wealth. Well, then, on that score, they are very good Secularists, and he, at least, should not complain.

But assuredly it is not meant that these five points comprise all that falls within the range of this debate on which the comparative merits of Secularism and Christianity are to be judged. I should say much more important topics would be culture, philanthropy, virtue, religion, etc. And these I will take up hereafter, if my opponent does not.

In conclusion, Mr. Watts says that “Christianity has had nearly fifteen hundred years of active exercise in which to remodel and regenerate the world.” I was under the impression that it had had more than eighteen hundred years. It has not succeeded. Not succeeded in doing what? In making society perfect? Well, that’s an advantage according to Mr. Watts, for, if it had, there would be an end of all “exertion” and “law and legislature.” But he forgets that during that eighteen hundred years this religion has proved the *palingenesia* to millions of our race who have passed away, and who are now, according to our view, the subjects of an eternal progression in all that is good and holy—a progress commenced here, but to end, never. And to-day it is the mightiest moral force that the world has ever experienced. Of this religion Lecky—a Rationalist—says: “As a matter

of fact, it has probably done more to quicken the affections of mankind, to promote piety, to create a pure and merciful ideal, than any other influence that has ever acted on the world" ("Hist. of Rat.," vol. i., p. 358). The author of the most learned book against Christianity that this age has produced is compelled, despite his Scepticism, to make the following confession: "The teaching of Jesus carried morality to the sublimest point attained, or even attainable, by humanity. The influence of his spiritual religion has been rendered doubly great by the unparalleled purity and elevation of his own character. Surpassing in his sublime simplicity and earnestness the moral grandeur of Sakya Muni, and putting to the blush the sometimes sullied, though generally admirable, teachings of Socrates and Plato, and the whole round of Greek philosophers, he presented the rare spectacle of a life, so far as we can estimate it, uniformly noble and consistent with his own lofty principles; so that the 'imitation of Christ' has become almost the final word in the preaching of his religion, and must continue to be one of the most powerful elements of its permanence" ("Supernatural Religion," vol. ii., p. 487). And Secularism, what has it done to benefit the world? Simply nothing. It is no real light, but an *ignis fatuus*, leading those who follow it into bogs and swamps, in which, perchance, they may perish ere the rising of the sun. *Quod avertat Deus!*

MR. WATTS'S SIXTH LETTER.

DURING this discussion I have repeatedly requested Dr. Sexton to produce some distinctive Christian principles which he deems superior to Secular teachings, but he has not hitherto done so. It appears to me that he prefers dealing with side issues rather than debating general principles. Moreover, he repeats the same line of argument, altogether disregarding the answers I have given to them. For instance, my opponent commences his last letter by referring to what he deems an act of persecution towards himself, and then repeats his old statement that the persecuting spirit belongs to human nature. Of course it does ; but if Dr. Sexton's claims be true, then, as I stated in my fourth letter, Christianity should have rendered persecution impossible—at least, among professing Christians themselves. The difference between Secularism and Christianity upon this point is, that in no Secular publication is persecution recommended, while in the New Testament incentives to acts of intolerance are distinctly given.

My opponent's fifth letter will not be ignored ; but before replying to it he is once more requested to answer important questions which I have frequently put affecting the very principle in debate. These questions must be kept before the reader until the Doctor either replies to them or expresses his determination not to do so. These questions are—(1) What are the distinctive Christian principles that are supposed to be superior to Secularism ? If these are stated, the debate can then proceed on principles, and not merely on side issues. (2) Where in the New Testament can better teachings be found than those given by me in the first paragraph of my second letter ? (3) Would the secular welfare of mankind be improved

by the consistent and literal acting up to the New Testament teachings mentioned in the third paragraph of my second letter? (4) Why am I to accept Dr. Sexton's opinion relative to the value of the Bible as an authority, in preference to the recorded views of such scholars as Professor Jowett and Dr. Irons (see first paragraph of my second letter)? (5) Will my opponent show that national progress is the result of aught else but the devotion of man's principal attention to the things of "time," and that such attention renders a person less fit for any possible "eternity"? (6) Does Christianity threaten punishment in another world for disbelief of its theological doctrines in this? (7) Did not the Christian Church for many centuries prevent the recognition and diffusion of such elements of civilisation as science, philosophy, and education? (8) If during the Middle Ages the Church that ignored progress was not truly Christian, where were the "genuine Christians" of the time, and what history records their labours? (9) Can Christianity furnish us at the present time with a better guide for daily life than reason and experience? (10) Is it a necessary part of Christianity to believe in the Bible description of its Deity; that Christ's death redeemed the world from the supposed effects of the alleged fall of Adam; that the Devil is a person, and that hell is a place of everlasting torture?

I press for a straightforward answer to the above questions, in order that the comparison between Secularism and Christianity shall be thorough, and not merely attempts at special pleading. Dr. Sexton refuses to answer my question as to the Holy Ghost. Is this because he knows nothing about it? If so, it is an admission upon his part of orthodox weakness. Here is a system proclaiming a "sin" which, if committed, can never be forgiven either in this or in any other world; and yet my opponent cannot tell me what the "sin" is. But surely it ought to be thought necessary to define the nature of this offence against the third person of the Christian Tritheism—if for no other reason, yet in order that man might not by its commission incur the eternal vengeance of an angry Judge. Let him produce an analogous case to this from Secularism.

Dr. Sexton says: "The regular business is stopped

because Secularism is not yet satisfactorily defined." Satisfactory to whom? To the Doctor, of course? This is not marvellous when he finds that, when accurately defined, Secularism is very different from his perversions of it as given throughout the country. He says that "Secularism is nothing at all." Elsewhere, however, he admits that we have principles, and some that are "positive" ("Fallacies of Secularism," p. 8). Why does my opponent thus contradict himself? If Secularism be nothing, as he alleges, then his "Fallacies" are nothing, which possibly may be the case.

If the reader is concerned to know whether or not I have defined Secularism in this debate, he is referred as follows:—For a general definition of Secularism, to the first paragraph in my first letter; for its moral basis, paragraph seven of the same letter; for a statement of its principles, paragraph one of my second letter; for its moral code differentiated, paragraph ten of the same letter; for its superiority, the last paragraph but two in my first letter and paragraph six in my third letter.

In opposition to this, Dr. Sexton puts Christianity as contained in Luke x. 27 and "all the New Testament." When, however, the doctrines of the book are mentioned, he says they are not to be debated. From the pulpit he preaches the Theism of the Bible, the fall of man and his salvation, the atonement by Christ, rewards and punishments after the present life for belief and disbelief in this. Surely, therefore, he regards such doctrines as belonging to Christianity, and it is his duty either to defend them in this debate or to retire from the discussion.

Dr. Sexton's defence of the ethical portion of Christianity is that—(1) Morality is that which harmonises with the will of God; (2) the moral source is the holiness of God; (3) moral sanctions "are found in the revelation which God has given of his will to man;" (4) moral incentives are "the desire to develop our highest spiritual powers." Let us examine these positions. (1) For a definition of "the will of God" Dr. Sexton refers me to a dictionary. Will he name a dictionary that will inform me what it is? What is meant by "will" can be easily understood; but the information required is what is *God's will*. I assert that the Bible

represents God's will as being contradictory. If my opponent thinks that I am wrong upon this point, let him state what, according to the Bible, is God's will upon—for instance, truth, honesty, murder, adultery, fidelity to the family circle, and universal salvation. (2) If, by the holiness of God, we are to understand the character given him in the Bible, it would be interesting to know how such a character could be made a source of moral conduct to us. Nearly every action which society to-day considers immoral was ascribed by the various writers of the Bible to their Deity. Will Dr. Sexton contend that God's alleged doings with Moses, Jacob, Joshua, and David were so holy that we could accept them as a source of morals? Besides, is it not a fact that among the most moral men and women are to be found those who guide their lives by rules the very opposite to those of the orthodox Theistic holiness? Even the eminent Scotch divine, Chalmers, admitted this to be so. The Bishop of Hereford, in his Bampton Lectures, says: "The principles of morality are founded in our nature, independently of any religious belief, and are, in fact, obligatory even upon the Atheist." And the Rev. Dr. Allon, in his lecture on the New Testament, published under the auspices of the Christian Evidence Society, observes that a man may be "a pure moralist," and yet "reject, not only Christianity, but every form of Theism." Clearly, then, the Secular position is right, that no phase of theology monopolises the source of morality. (3) In what part of the supposed revelation are moral sanctions to be found and what is their character? It is desirable that my opponent should be clear upon this matter, inasmuch as it is said that God has given two revelations of his will, and the one in many important statements contradicts the other. (4) Dr. Sexton's definition in his last letter of "spiritual powers" as an incentive to morality proves too much for his position. Theistic "joys and aspirations" are professed by Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant, Mohammedan and Mormon, the Advanced Theist and the Unitarian. Now, all these religionists claim the "incentive" mentioned by my opponent; but the different conduct practised and the varied motives for action existing among them are well known. In the Jew, the Catholic, the

Mohammedan, and the Mormon such an "incentive" has resulted in habits that even Dr. Sexton probably would not defend from an ethical standpoint. Where, then, is the advantage of such an incentive?

My opponent once more asserts that Secularists "differ upon everthing worth naming." This is a reckless and inaccurate assertion. Who are the Secularists that differ upon the seven principles given in the first paragraph of my second letter? Let us have names and particulars, not bare denial and vague generalities.

The reason why I took the lead in my last letter by adopting a new "line of argument" was that Dr. Sexton would neither lead nor follow, preferring to stand by the wayside, and repeat the fact that "Secularism was nothing" that he could understand.

The five requirements of mankind given in my last letter are commented upon by Dr. Sexton in a manner as curious as it is misleading. He says morality "disappears from this last exposition of Secularism." Most people would regard the five (certainly four of them) requirements of health, happiness, knowledge, progress, and wealth, as having some connection with morality. Perhaps, however, these agencies are not thought necessary to ethics according to the Doctor's orthodox notions. I am asked where Secularism inculcates the principles named. I answer in "The Principles of Secularism," by Mr. G. J. Holyoake, in Mr. Bradlaugh's debate on Secularism with the Rev. W. Barker, in my little work "Secularism in its Various Relations," and in the principles and objects of the British Secular Union and those of the National Secular Society.

In my remarks on health, Dr. Sexton says: "The inference we are expected to draw is, that Secularists are clean and Christians 'dirty.'" I never hinted at such a foolish and insulting charge against professing Christians of to-day; on the contrary, I distinctly said: "It is not denied that Christians in the present age display anxiety in this respect" (cleanliness). My argument is, that during the long ages when orthodoxy was supreme, sanitary science was neglected, and that it is only during the nineteenth century—the most Sceptical century in the Christian era—that sanitation has made marked progress. Is it not true that the Middle-Age Christians were negli-

gent in regard to health and cleanliness? And will it be denied that the greatest religious teachers of that period persistently taught the mortification of the body? Did not Thomas à Beckett and countless others wear hair shirts, and otherwise sedulously and systematically neglect the providing for aught more than such physical necessities as eating and drinking? The reader will find plenty of facts given by Dr. Draper, in his "Intellectual Development of Europe," and his "Conflict between Religion and Science," to justify my argument. The mode which it is said Christ adopted in reference to disease, and the means of promoting health mentioned in the New Testament, would not be emulated even by my opponent to-day. Diseased persons in these times are not treated as if they were possessed of devils; neither do persons "Take no thought for their lives," or rely upon the "prayer of faith" to save them. It is worthy of note here that Roger Bacon was imprisoned fourteen years by the Christian authorities for teaching facts of chemistry, a science, the knowledge of which, since his time, has done so much to promote health and sanitation.

Pessimism does not find a resting-place, as the Doctor insinuates, in Secularism. Its legitimate home is in that orthodox faith which teaches "Blessed are they that mourn;" that "many are called, but few are chosen;" that the majority of our fellow creatures shall be cast into a burning hell, and "be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of holy angels," for "ever and ever." Better far to believe that "death ends all" than to think this gloomy creed is a reality. My opponent professes not to be able to comprehend my meaning in a sentence which he transcribes. Of course, I ought to regret having failed to make my meaning obvious to every reader. What I intended to convey was this: the mainspring, lever, and incentive to human exertion are furnished by the fact of the existence of certain detriments to happiness. In every stage of progress such will exist, although modified in proportion to man's improvement and knowledge. For instance, death can never be banished from the world, but the prevention of premature death constitutes the motive-power of Medicine. Not to multiply instances, however, of a principle which all can understand, I here re-affirm that in the spiritually regenerated world

of Christianity, in the millennium, there would be absolute stagnation. There would be no vice to combat, no virtue to promote. But one kind of actions would be known—namely, those of absolute virtue. But experience tells us that the exercise of good impulses is only a virtue because of the possibility of following evil ones. If all men and all nature were untainted with evil, with ignorance, with the capacity for growing tares instead of wheat, where would be the stimulus either to the philanthropist or the cultivator of the soil? Of course, perfection—in the absolute sense—can never be attained, and in teaching that it can consists the ethical weakness of orthodoxy.

If Christians have invariably promoted knowledge, how is it that in the early Christian ages the Church destroyed Secular knowledge, and in modern times the same Church has opposed national education. Most of the very men mentioned by Dr. Sexton—many of whom, by-the-bye, were not orthodox Christians at all—were persecuted by this very Christian Church for their educational efforts. Dr. Priestley was not a believer in my opponent's orthodox Christianity; and Galileo, Kepler, and Copernicus were hunted down because they were sceptical to the then orthodox exposition of the Scriptures.

It is quite true that modern Christians believe in wealth, but the question is, does not the orthodox faith condemn riches? "Blessed be ye poor," "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," were the injunctions of Jesus, who made poverty a test of perfection.

There remain three general features in this debate which I shall deal with hereafter—namely, the alleged religious sentiment, Bible contradictions, and the relative influence of Christianity and Secularism upon the world. I again urge upon Dr. Sexton not to waste time in referring to the individual opinions of Freethinkers upon minor matters, but to deal with general principles. Nothing would be more easy for me than to fill a dozen letters with the contradictory teachings of individual professing Christians. I prefer, however, to deal with principles, not men; it being, in my opinion, more dignified, and certainly more instructive.

DR. SEXTON'S SEVENTH LETTER.

My respected opponent must excuse me if I say that he treats his Secularism in this debate like a box of dominoes. The so-called principles of his system are pushed about in all sorts of ways, and the line of argument changed so often that it becomes impossible to follow out a regular and legitimate train of reasoning. In his last letter but one, instead of replying to mine that had preceded it—as, by the rules of debate, he was bound to do—he did a hop, skip, and a jump, and went off to a number of what I conceived to be somewhat irrelevant topics about progress, wealth, cleanliness, *et hoc genus omne*. Well, I followed him, and used some arguments that I deemed conclusive under the heads that he had himself selected, and, lo ! in his last letter the dominoes are shuffled again, and the game presents a new aspect. My fifth letter he still promises to answer—which is certainly something—but he does not condescend to tell us when, so that task may, for aught I know, be deferred to the Greek Kalends.

Another string of queries is presented for me to answer. Mr. Watts puts questions like a school inspector. Not that I object to answering his interrogations, so long as they are pertinent and have not been replied to before, which is just what cannot be said of those that I have before me in his last letter. But does it not occur to my friend that, while it is his privilege to put questions, it is also his duty to answer mine? In my fifth letter will be found a goodly number of queries, bearing directly on the Secularistic moral code, to which no kind of answer has been given, that letter being confessedly ignored up to the present. And in my last I asked six questions respecting progress—a topic introduced by Mr. Watts himself—which are not so much as named.

For saying that Secularists "differ on everything worth naming" I am called "reckless." But have I not proved this in previous letters? One says it is Atheism, another declares that it is nothing of the kind, and Mr. Watts has himself, in his career, taken both these views, as I have shown. My opponent in this debate limits its agency to "material means alone"—and these I cannot get defined—while Mr. Holyoake affirms that Secularists are free to avail themselves of "supernatural aid," to believe in Providence, and to engage in prayer. According to this last-named authority—probably the greatest among them—Secularism "does not question the pretensions of Christianity," while Mr. Bradlaugh declares that he is "obliged to destroy Theism to make way for Secularism," and Mr. Watts himself, in this very debate, is engaged in questioning the pretensions of Christianity in the name of Secularism. On the subject of morals they are all at sixes and sevens. They have no authority to which an appeal can be made. Their writings are desultory, incoherent, inconsistent, contradictory, with the natural conditions—*quot homines, tot sententiæ*—and the natural result. Secularism is, in fact, anything that any one chooses to call by that name, or, more correctly, it is nothing at all. It is simply a negation, and they who seek to get anything out of it are about as profitably occupied as was that philosopher immortalised by Swift, who endeavoured to extract moonbeams from cucumbers. Mr. Watts says in his last letter that I have admitted the existence of positive principles in Secularism, and asks: "Why does my opponent thus contradict himself?" When and where did I ever admit anything of the kind? I am referred to my "Fallacies of Secularism," page 8. But this surely must be a *lapsus calami* on the part of Mr. Watts, for on that very page of my book I emphatically deny that Secularism has any positive principles to call its own.

The question of morals is assuredly a most important one, yet I cannot get the ethical code of Secularism defined. I want the five sources of morals differentiated and the exact value of each stated. And here I will ask a question that I have not asked before. If, as Mr. Holyoake says, "there are guarantees of morality in human nature," etc., how does it happen that there is any

immorality in the world at all? What sort of a guarantee is that which fails at almost every point to meet its obligation? In my friend's last letter he quotes two Christian authorities to prove that the principles of morality are to be found in human nature, as though I had denied it. Why, I stated as much myself in my third letter. Did I not say that "the source of moral obligation is the holiness of God, and, in a secondary sense, the moral nature which God has given to man"? But this will not help my opponent out of his difficulty, since he does not believe in God as a Holy Being and a Moral Governor.

Then I ask once more how any system of morality can be possible where there is not freedom of the will? If, as Mr. Holyoake affirms, "an iron necessity overrules destiny," how can there be any such thing as a moral act at all? Mr. Bradlaugh has faced this terrible problem, and accepted the consequences by denying responsibility altogether (*vide* Debate with Dr. Baylee, p. 29). Will Mr. Watts do the same? I have again and again asked him to tell me whether man is a responsible being, but as yet have not succeeded in eliciting an answer. I want a reply to the following queries:—1. Is man responsible? 2. If so, to what extent? 3. How can there be any responsibility where there is no freedom of choice?

Regarding Pessimism, Mr. Watts says that "its legitimate home" is in the "orthodox faith." Well, if so, it has clearly deserted "its legitimate home," for it is never found there by any chance. Every Pessimist whose writings I am acquainted with is an Atheist. If Mr. Watts knows of one who is a Christian, he will be good enough to let us have his name. Schopenhauer, the Coryphæus of the modern school of Pessimists, was assuredly far enough removed from orthodox Christianity, as is the author of "The City of Dreadful Night," and Mr. Watts's own contributor, Mr. W. Stewart Ross, from whose pen a Pessimist poem appeared in the *Secular Review* for June 7th, 1879. I have already shown that Secularists confess to being wretched in this world, and, like the old Romans—before Christ came to bring joy and peace into their midst—recommend suicide as a remedy. With the ancients suicide was publicly advocated and most extensively practised. In fact, it was declared to be a courageous and virtuous act for a man

to take his own life. Seneca pleaded for it, Cicero advocated it, and Brutus and Cassius, in company with many others, both defended it and practised it. Plutarch—humane and good-natured as he was—praises Cato for having put an end to his life by his own hand. Then Christianity came and swept away the monstrous and wicked notion that a man was justified in taking his own life. But to-day, after more than eighteen hundred years have gone by, a revival of Paganism, under the new name of Secularism, is attempted ; and again suicide is advocated. And this system—assuredly in grim and ghastly irony—talks of the chief end of man being to promote happiness. Mr. Holyoake, six months in prison, was so wretched, despite all the consolations that Secularism could afford him, that he made preparations for destroying himself by Jetting fall the foot of his bedstead upon his head (*vide* “Last Trial by Jury for Atheism,” p. 73). Grand old John Bunyan twelve years in Bedford Gaol, at a period when prison treatment was much less endurable, occupied his time in writing a book which has had a larger circulation, perhaps, than any other work, the Bible alone excepted, and proved a blessing to millions of our race. “Look on this picture and on that.” Bunyan had the consolations which Christianity alone can give. Secularism, thy name is despair.

In my last I mentioned an act of petty and cowardly persecution on the part, not of a single Secularist, but of a so-called “Secular Society.” Mr. Watts speaks of this as something which *I deem* an act of persecution. It would appear, then, he does not look at it in that light. Well, let it pass. At a Secularistic gathering which took place last year at Sheffield Mr. Holyoake presented the following doleful picture of the present position of affairs in this movement. I quote from the *Secular Review* : “Years ago, when he knew Carlile, Watson, Lovett, Hetherington, and others, who went to prison rather than have their opinions suppressed, he never expected to live to see the day when persons calling themselves Free-thinkers would have prohibited the appearance in their halls of lecturers on the same side who did not exactly agree with them, or, on the other hand, of a Freethought bookstore where Freethought books of only one kind were sold. You might as well be a Roman Catholic

community as a Society where such a state of things was possible in the name of Freethought." So, after thirty years of propagandist efforts by means of the platform and the Press, Secularism has resulted in the production of a race of "Freethinkers" who are as great enemies of freedom as the Roman Catholics themselves. And yet these men make the bunkum cry of liberty their watchword, and bawl out against persecution as though they were horrified at the very name of the thing. Even at this very Conference we had no end of twaddle talked about the hardships that poor Atheists had to endure in not being allowed quietly to take seats in the British House of Commons. Suppose there existed a Parliament composed of Freethinkers of the type of men Mr. Holyoake describes—and there is no difficulty in discovering at whom his shafts are aimed—a pretty chance a solitary Christian would have in finding his way to a place among them. One really wonders how such men can swagger about liberty without laughing outright in each other's faces. But then, says Mr. Watts, "the difference between Secularism and Christianity upon this point is that in no Secular publication is persecution recommended, while in the New Testament incentives to acts of intolerance are distinctly given." Where in the New Testament is persecution recommended? I thought I was pretty well acquainted with that book, but I have not seen the passage to which Mr. Watts refers. I know that on one occasion, when the disciples desired to persecute, the Lord rebuked them, and said: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (Luke ix. 55). If Secular publications have not recommended persecution, Secular teachers have, which is the same thing, for these men's teachings, whether written or spoken, constitute all that there is of Secularism. Besides, how has the practice become so general as Mr. Holyoake affirms that it has?

Mr. Watts says that I referred him to a dictionary for a definition of "the will of God." Why does my friend misrepresent me in this way? He knows that I did nothing of the kind. Neither does the Bible represent God's Will as being contradictory. On the contrary, it describes God as the One Perfect Being, and enjoins perfection upon us on that ground (Matt. v. 48), which constitutes the moral incentive referred to before. I am

asked what is God's Will upon "truth, honesty, murder, adultery, fidelity to the family circle, and universal salvation" Really to answer such a question as this would be simply to quote texts and occupy space unnecessarily. Suffice it to say that, if Mr. Watts does not know, the first Sunday school scholar that he meets can tell him. Do I "contend that God's alleged doings with Moses, Jacob, Joshua, and David were holy?" Most assuredly I do; only that is foreign to the question that we are discussing.

Now, I will answer Mr. Watts's questions, most of which, however, have been replied to before. 1. (answered in my second letter) Love to God as the basis of love to man. The Fatherhood of God, and, as a consequence and outcome of it, the brotherhood of man, upon which two relationships the golden rule is based, and without which it would be valueless. The author of "Supernatural Religion"—the most learned book ever written on my opponent's side—says: "While all previous systems had merely sought to purify the stream, it [Christ's teaching] demanded the purification of the fountain. It placed the evil thought on a par with the evil action. Such morality, based upon the intelligent and earnest acceptance of Divine Law and perfect recognition of the brotherhood of man, is the highest conceivable of humanity, and, although its power and influence must augment with increase of enlightenment, it is itself beyond development, consisting, as it does, of principles unlimited in their range and inexhaustible in their application" ("Supernatural Religion," vol. ii., pp. 487—8). This statement of a Sceptic concedes that Christ's moral system is perfect and beyond improvement. 2. The teachings in the previous letter here referred to have been already dealt with. What has Christianity to offer superior to these? Listen to Greg, an unbeliever, and, therefore, on my opponent's side. The religion of Jesus, he tells us, "contains more truth, purer truth, higher truth, stronger truth, than has ever yet been given to man" ("Creed of Christendom," p. 224). 3. The Secular welfare of mankind would be enormously improved if man acted up to New Testament teachings. 4. What Professor Jowett or Dr. Irons may say cannot affect the question that we are discussing as to the value of Chris-

tianity. Both of them would agree with me that Secularism and Christianity stand in about the same relationship to each other as a cabbage stump to the planet Jupiter, or a farthing rushlight to the sun. 5. I have already answered this by saying that Christianity enjoins attention to the things of this world. National progress! What has Secularism ever done towards national progress, or, for the matter of that, progress of any kind? Professor Max Müller—no Christian in my sense of the word—says, in his last work: “To my mind, the great epochs in the world’s history are marked, not by the foundation or the destruction of empires, by the migrations of races, or by French revolutions. All this is outward history, made up of events that seem gigantic and overpowering to those only who cannot see beyond and beneath. The real history of man is the history of religion: the wonderful ways by which the different families of the human race advanced towards a truer knowledge and a deeper love to God. This is the foundation that underlies all profane history: it is the light, the soul, and life of history, and without it all history would indeed be profane” (“Selected Essays on Language, Mythology, and Religion”). Religion has always been the forerunner of civilisation. 6. Already answered in letter four, being one of a string of questions previously put in Mr. Watts’s third letter, as the reader may see. 7. A so-called Christian church may have acted as Mr. Watts intimates, although on that score the matter has been greatly exaggerated. For even John Stuart Mill is compelled to admit that “the clergy were the preservers of all letters and all culture, and even the traditions of literary antiquity is too evident to have ever been disputed. But for these there would have been a complete break in Western Europe between the ancient and modern world” (Dissertations, vol. ii., p. 154). Christian men, actuated by Christian faith and stimulated by Christian love, carried education into dark and benighted districts in all the ages since the Advent. But, supposing that a church did stop the progress of knowledge, then, in the first place, it would forfeit its right to be considered Christian, and, in the second, it might be claimed by the Secularists, for I have already shown it to be one of their principles to decry knowledge. 8. There were genuine

Christians, both in the Church and outside its pale, as there are to-day and always have been. 9. A better guide? Well, they have an additional guide. Christians can reason as clearly, and have experiences as wide, as Secularists, and they have, in addition, a Revelation of God's Will to man. They have three guides, therefore, where the Secularist has but two, and the third is superior to both the others combined. 10. This has been answered before. It is necessary for Christians to believe in the truths taught in the Bible.

Mr. Watts returns again to a point named in my last, which I must confess read to me very like a joke when I saw it in his previous letter. In order that there may be no mistake, I will again transcribe his own words: "I here re-affirm that in the spiritually-regenerated world of Christianity, in the millennium, there would be absolute stagnation. There would be no vice to combat, no virtue to promote. But one kind of actions would be known—namely, those of absolute virtue." So, then, it is not desirable to get rid of vice, and Christianity is to be blamed for making the attempt. I must say, that in all the course of my reading I have never come across such an extraordinary argument against New Testament teachings as this. Vice must be preserved so that we can combat it. But why combat it at all if it be necessary that it should remain? Or is this fighting to be done simply as a matter of amusement? Our business, it seems, is to combat immorality; but we must be very careful not to destroy it, or, *mirabile dictu*, there would be no more to fight against. Just as birds are preserved for sportsmen and fishes for anglers, so vice must be protected in order that men may do battle with it. Old vices, I suppose, may be killed; but young ones we must be careful to leave alone, because otherwise the whole race might possibly become extinct, and then the sport would be at an end. This throws a flood of light on Secularistic apathy. I have often wondered how it was that the Secularists did so little in this way; the problem is now solved: they are afraid that the energy of Christians may get rid of moral evil altogether, and then—horrible possibility!—there would be "only one kind of actions known—those of absolute virtue." How dreadful, to be sure! The bare idea is enough to cause one's hair to stand on end.

Mr. Watts says that he did not intend us to infer that he meant to charge Christians with being dirty. I am glad to hear it ; only one fails to see the point of his argument if he did not. For what purpose did he introduce the expression "gospel of dirt"—a phrase, by the way, first used by Thomas Carlyle to describe the Infidel theory of evolution ? It is idle to tell us that the "Europeans were dirty in the Middle Ages." Very likely they were, and so are a good many people to-day. But what has that to do with Christianity ? Did Mr. Watts ever read the following passage : "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. x. 22) ? When men are dirty, therefore, they act in opposition to the teaching of the New Testament, and follow Mr. Watts's big Bible of Nature (*vide* the passage from J. Stuart Mill quoted in my last letter).

In conclusion, I will just add that the Gospel of Christ is the only true Secularism, covering all the ground of human duties, fitted to make men wise and happy here, and guiding them to the regions of peace and love in the Great Hereafter. Bailey has well said in "Festus":—

"But, foremost of all studies, let me not
Forget to bid thee learn Christ's faith by heart.
Study its truths and practise its behests ;
They are the purest, sweetest, peacefullest,
Of all immortal reasons or records ;
They will be with thee when all else have gone.
Mind, body, passion, all wear out—not faith
Nor truth."

MR. WATTS'S SEVENTH LETTER.

MANY of the points in Dr. Sexton's fifth letter which he complains have not been answered by me will be replied to in this letter, while I am dealing with other of my opponent's allegations. Whatever statements remain unnoticed, if they are mentioned in his next letter, shall have my immediate attention. I am desirous of considering all that Dr. Sexton has to say, and I would remind him that, if he dealt more with the main question at issue, there would not be so many side issues for me to answer.

In my fourth letter is stated what I mean by material means; yet my opponent ignores what is there said, and complains that his question has not been answered. By material means we understand that which is calculable in its operations, being the very antithesis of what the Doctor calls spiritual.

Dr. Sexton still persists in fencing, instead of boldly grappling with the real question under discussion—the comparative merits of Secularism and Christianity. Is it not almost time that he favoured the readers of this debate with some proof of the alleged superiority of the system which he has undertaken to defend? His time is chiefly occupied in endeavouring to show that Secularism is imperfect, and that differences of opinion exist among Freethinkers. Both of these positions, however, are granted; therefore, the Doctor is only wasting time in continually reiterating them. Would it not be better for my opponent to show that Christianity is superior in this respect, and that there is less diversity of opinion in the Christian ranks than in the schools of Secular thought? In my previous letters Professor Jowett and Dr. Irons were cited as differing widely from Dr. Sexton upon

most material points involved in this debate : to this my opponent replies that "it cannot affect the question that we are discussing" Why, then, should differences of opinion among Freethinkers affect the value of Secularism? Must the fact be again repeated that Secular principles recognise the impossibility of uniformity of speculative belief, while Christianity enjoins it as an absolute necessity? Let Dr. Sexton state which is the better system in this particular. Let him also name any Secularist who does not agree with me in my general definition of Secularism, as given in the first paragraph in my first letter ; in its moral basis, as given in paragraph seven of the same letter ; in its principles, as given in paragraph one of my second letter ; in its moral code differentiated, in paragraph ten of the same letter ; and in its superiority, as set forth in the last paragraph but two in my first letter and paragraph six in my third letter. Here Secularism and its moral code are fully stated and explained, and until Dr. Sexton can prove that Secularists contradict each other upon these fundamental points, his persistent harping upon minor differences among us "cannot affect the question we are discussing."

More than once in this discussion Dr. Sexton has denied that Secularism has any principles whatever. In my last letter I referred to his "Fallacies of Secularism," where he admits that we have principles, and that some of them are positive. In his reply to this, he says that in that very book he denies that we have any principles to call our own. That is true ; but nevertheless he grants that we have the principles. His words are that his business then was to deal "with the principles ;" and then comes his assertion that all our "positive principles" have been taken from other sources. He does not, however, prove where we obtained them from. Perhaps he will try to do so in his next letter.

Dr. Sexton says he cannot get the ethical code of Secularism defined. How far this statement is accurate the reader can readily decide for himself by referring to my previous letters, as noted above. Why does not my opponent answer what is there written? I am asked : "If there are guarantees of morality in human nature, how does it happen that there is any immorality in the

world at all?" Simply because natural laws have not been sufficiently attended to, or that those laws have been counteracted through conduct arising from false education, allied with theological teachings, which have inspired erroneous conceptions of human duties. To corroborate my position, that such guarantees do exist in nature, I quoted in my last letter two Christian authorities, who admit that those guarantees are in nature. Mark how the Doctor deals with this admission. He says: "I stated as much myself." I ask, when and where? No such a statement from my opponent is to be found in this debate. His position is that "the holiness of God" is also required, whereas, according to the Christian authorities quoted by me, the guarantees exist "independently of any religious belief," and apart from "every form of Theism." Now let the question be reversed: if "the holiness of God" be the source of moral obligation, "how does it happen that there is any immorality in the world?" If God is the author of nature, is he not responsible for the defection of the guarantee "which fails at almost every point to meet its obligation"? The question resolves itself into this: we must either follow nature as a whole, or select its better parts as guides. To accept it as a guide in its entirety, as arranged—according to the Doctor's theory—by God, would be injurious; we must, therefore, follow nature when it has been improved by the reason and experience of mankind. In other words, it is the good in nature discovered by the human intellect that is our monitor. Is not this the Secular principle of utility, the ethical code based on the result of actions? I must again press my opponent to answer my questions—What is "the holiness of God"? and Can man be moral without it?

Three questions are asked me as to responsibility, and man's power to choose. If by responsibility is here meant that we should deem it our duty to consider the effect of our conduct upon society, and that it is incumbent upon us to act with a view of promoting, not to injure, the welfare of society, then I admit we are responsible. That responsibility, however, is confined to this life, and its extent depends upon the condition and position of the individual, and his relation to the general

community. Of course, where there is *no* power to choose, there can be no responsibility. Perhaps, therefore, my opponent will tell me how he harmonises the doctrine of predestination and those passages in the New Testament which speak of the "elect," and those which assert that man of himself can do no good thing, with the theological notion of responsibility.

Dr. Sexton's reply to my remarks upon Pessimism is truly amusing, and entirely ignores the point I urged. Does it follow that, because a man writes a Pessimist poem, therefore he is a believer in Pessimism? This would be reducing a poet's licence with a vengeance. Would my opponent apply this principle to Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, or any of the other great poets? Why, from the poetical writings of the very two gentlemen quoted by Dr. Sexton in his last letter poems could be cited which teach far more Optimism than Pessimism. But the point in my argument was this, that a person must indeed have a gloomy view of life if he believed the orthodox teaching, that certain persons were ordained to condemnation before they were born, that only a few out of the human family can be saved, and that the majority of our fellow-kind will be burning in hell "for ever and ever." Let Dr. Sexton reconcile this teaching, if he can, with a happy view of the future of our race. His reference to suicide is equally evasive and beside the question. He cites Mr. G. J. Holyoake's remarks upon this subject to prove that Secularists recommend suicide, and that their principles are too weak to sustain them in the hour of affliction. As well might it be urged that the Bible teaches suicide when it says: "Put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite" (Prov. xxiii. 2). If Mr. Holyoake was in favour of suicide, why did he not commit it, he having, as my opponent states, "made preparations"? In the very passage cited by Dr. Sexton Mr. Holyoake states: "I am no friend to suicide." Despite the misery and agony of body and mind to which he was subjected during his imprisonment, he found his principles all sufficient to sustain him, which is more than can be said of the Christian champion, Hugh Miller, who, notwithstanding the "consolations of Christianity," killed himself. "Look on this picture and on that." How often do we hear of persons

holding Secular views putting an end to their lives? But we frequently read in the public newspapers of suicide through religious fear. Theological fanaticism, "thy name is despair."

My opponent says that he does not know the passages in the New Testament where persecution is taught. I here cite a few :—" And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for that city " (Matt. x. 14, 15). " If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed " (2 John i. 10). " Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.....what part hath he that believeth with an infidel ? " (2 Cor. vi. 14, 15). " If any teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.....he is proud, knowing nothing.....of corrupt minds, from such withdraw thyself " (1 Tim. vi. 3—5). " As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed " (Galatians i. 9). " Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme " (1. Tim. i. 20).

Dr. Sexton carefully avoids telling me what God's will is : he states, however, that it is not contradictory. That we shall see when he has defined it from the Bible—that is, if he can be induced to make the attempt. It is useless for Dr. Sexton to refer me to a Sunday-school scholar. I am discussing with him, and from him I demand an answer to my question as to what is God's will upon the subject mentioned in my last letter. My opponent alleges that God's doings with certain Bible heroes " were holy." Let us see if this were so. Read Genesis, xxx. and xxxi. There are to be found immorality, ingratitude, deceit, and theft ascribed to Jacob, who was encouraged and beloved by God. Read Exodus ix. 13—16 ; where people are seen to have been raised up by God for the very purpose of being " cut off from the earth " by Moses. Turn to Exodus xxxii., and read an account of the anger, injustice, and cruelty of Moses,

culminating in the slaughter of thousands of human beings at the command of God. Read Joshua vi., viii., and x., for a record of his reckless murder of thousands of human beings, among whom were men, women, and children, at the special command of God. Read 2 Samuel xii. 11—31, for adultery and cruelty in connection with David, and then peruse Psalms xxxviii. and cix., for a confession of a life of deceit, lying, and licentiousness. Yet we are told that David "was a man after God's own heart," and that he "kept God's commandments, and did that only which was right in his eyes" (1 Kings, xiv., 8). Now, I ask my opponent, were the above alleged doings of God with his servants "holy"? And is this the "holiness" which is to be accepted as a source of morals? These Biblical references are relevant to this debate, inasmuch as Dr. Sexton bases his moral source on "the holiness of God," and alleges that the acts of God as recorded in the Bible "were holy." (See paragraph seven of my opponent's last letter).

What Dr. Sexton terms an answer to my ten questions is really no answer at all. All that he puts forward as being distinctively superior in Christianity to Secularism is "the fatherhood of God as the basis of love to man." But this is not distinctive in Christianity; it is common to all phases of Theism, and, furthermore, it is assuming as proved the very question in debate. Let us have proof that this basis is superior to the one offered by Secularism. I must inquire of my opponent in which of his letters are teachings from the New Testament cited that he deems better for the secular welfare of man than those given in the first paragraph of my second letter, and where has he grappled during this debate with the un-secular character of Christian teachings mentioned in the third paragraph of the same letter? To my inquiry, shall we be punished in another world for the rejection of Christianity, I am told that "you cannot reject any truth without suffering the consequences of such rejection." Just so; but what are those consequences from the Christian standpoint? If you reject a Secular truth, the consequences are confined to this life, and they follow in time to make reformation possible. Not so with my opponent's scheme; in it there are not mere consequences, but punishment, to be inflicted for "ever and ever,"

when all opportunity for improvement has passed. What Secular principle decries knowledge? I ask for reference. I know of no such principle. If "genuine Christians" existed during the Middle Ages, the question is, where do we find a history of their doings?

The Doctor claims three guides for daily life against our two, his third being "a revelation of God's will to man." Up to the present he has not told us what that will is. Is it in the Old or in the New Testament? or is it in the two combined? Does it embrace the whole of the Scriptures, or only part? If not the whole, which part? Besides, if we can get on in daily life (and that is all to which my questions referred) as well with the two guides as the Doctor can with his three, where is the necessity for the third? If our capability to do this is doubted, let my opponent mention a duty of *daily life* that he can perform in consequence of his system that I cannot act up to in accordance with mine. Dr. Sexton is still silent as to what is the Holy Ghost, and whether or not he believes that Christ's death redeemed the world, the existence of a personal devil, and hell as a place of torture. I repeat the interrogation, what is the cause of this persistent silence? Does my opponent believe in "three persons," of the third of whom he knows nothing, and the second of whom he dares not defend in his sacrificial character, while the Bible delineations of the first are so questionable that he will not debate them? After this, let us hear no more about the "fallacies of Secularism" and the inconsistencies of its teachers.

My reference to a supposed spiritually-regenerated world was not intended, as the Doctor knows, to discourage human effort for improvement, but to indicate the inconsistency of the orthodox notion of perfection with the present constitution of humanity and the eternal law of progress.

What is said in Hebrews does not alter the fact that in the palmy days of Christian belief, when it was in the height of its power, sanitary laws were neglected, and the secular welfare of man ignored. If the professing Christians acted then contrary to their teachings, it furnishes another proof how little influence for good their faith had upon them. If there had ever been a period in history when Secularism, as an organisation, had such a trial and

showed similar results, Dr. Sexton would be the first to appeal to such results as a proof of the injurious effects of its principles. "By the fruits shall ye know the tree."

The Doctor concludes his letter by asserting "that the gospel of Christ is the only true Secularism." I should like some proof of this, and an answer (which has not yet been given) to paragraph third in my second letter, and the sixth paragraph in my third letter, which bear directly upon the assertion here referred to.

I now ask Dr. Sexton, instead of finding so much fault with what he regards as my defects in this discussion, to allow our readers to judge for themselves, and to remember the following truth :—

"In other men we faults can spy,
And blame the mote that dims their eye ;
Each little speck and blemish find ;
To our own stronger errors blind."

DR. SEXTON'S EIGHTH LETTER.

A MODERN writer very truthfully remarks: "We live in the midst of blessings, till we are utterly insensible of their greatness, and of the source from which they flow. We speak of our civilisation, our arts, our freedom, our laws, and forget entirely how large a share of all is due to Christianity. Blot Christianity out of the page of man's history, and what would his laws have been—what his civilisation? Christianity is mixed up with our very being and our daily life; there is not a familiar object round us which does not bear its mark, not a being or a thing which does not wear a different aspect because the light of Christian hope is on it, not a law which does not owe its truth and gentleness to Christianity, not a custom which cannot be traced in all its holy and healthful parts to the Gospel" (Rose). This is literally true, and hence we frequently overlook the blessings which Christianity has brought us, from the fact that they have surrounded us through life; and we have never, consequently, taken the trouble to ascertain their origin. No one can examine what is called Secularism without seeing that, wherever it professes to be positive, its teachings have been largely purloined from Christianity. And this is precisely what I said in my "Fallacies of Secularism," on the page to which reference has been made in Mr. Watts's two last letters. I have repeatedly in this debate asked for the distinctive principles of Secularism—which are not mere negations—and as yet none have been produced. The claim to act on "material means alone," about which so much is said by Secularists, is only peculiar to Secularism so far as it is negative. For everybody uses material means, but does not limit his agency to them. And what these "material means" are that Secularism claims as its own

sole and special property, I can't get explained. Mr. Watts says he gave the definition in his fourth letter. Well, the reader can turn to that letter, and, if he discovers such a definition, he will be more fortunate than I have been, and may indeed be considered to come under description in the following lines :—

“Optics sharp it needs, I ween,
To see what is not to be seen.”

Mr. Watts now writes : “By material means we understand that which is calculable in its operations, being the very antithesis of what the Doctor calls spiritual.” Never mind what these means are the antithesis of ; the question is, What are they ? I asked before, whether they include “thought, feeling, passion, emotion, etc.” (*vide* my third letter), and whether “the help from prayer or from Providence,” and the “availability of supernatural aid” which Mr. Holyoake kindly allows to Secularists, are to be classed among them (*vide* my fifth letter). I have not observed any reply to these queries. “Material means,” as words are generally employed, simply imply dynamical agents or forces. If Secularists use them in this sense, then no one of them carries out his pretensions. As to the calculability of their operations, I shall be glad to know by what mathematical process Mr. Watts can calculate, with any degree of exactness, what will be the result of any lecture that he may deliver, or book that he may write, or indeed of the part that he is taking in this debate. And if he can't do so, then, according to his own definition, he is using other than material means.

We have at last obtained an admission that Secularists are not agreed among themselves. But with this concession comes the attempt to throw dust in the reader's eyes, by comparing, not for the first time, such diversity of opinion with that which is to be observed among Christians. There is no sort of analogy, however, between the two cases, as I have already shown. Professor Jowett, Dr. Irons, and myself are all at one upon the origin and Divine authority of Christianity, upon the inspiration of the Scriptures, and, in fact, upon all the fundamentals of the Christian faith. But Secularists are agreed upon nothing, except perhaps the practice of quar-

relling with each other ; and as their opinions constitute Secularism, this same Secularism becomes anything and everything and nothing at all. I have before quoted these points of difference, but my opponent very carefully and very judiciously avoids them. Let him deal only with one—that which refers to the opposition to Christianity. Mr. Holyoake says that “Secularism does not question the pretensions of Christianity,” while most Secularists keep it aired in doing nothing else, and they declare that there is no place for it while any form of religion remains upon the earth.

The ethical code of Secularism I still maintain has not been given. In a former letter I placed Mr. Holyoake’s five sources of morals in the form of an equation, and asked to have them differentiated. This has not been done. In reply to my question, How, if there are guarantees of morality in human nature, can there be any immorality at all? Mr. Watts replies: “Simply because natural laws have not been sufficiently attended to,” etc., and then attempts to corroborate his position by a reference to two Christian authorities—with both of whom I agree—who, Mr. Watts says, “admit that these guarantees are in nature.” I deny that either of them used the word “guarantee.” Mr. Watts surely knows, as a business man, what guarantee means. I again ask, What sort of a guarantee is that which fails, in the majority of cases, to meet its engagements? The same argument will apply to the reference to the Holiness of God, which I pointed out as the source of moral obligation—not a guarantee of morality in man.

The remarks about God having made nature, etc., are quite beside the question, because God did not make the external universe to be a guide in morals.

Mr. Watts has made another valuable concession—viz., “Where there is no power to choose there can be no responsibility.” Now, I have already shown that both Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Holyoake deny any such power ; therefore, there is an end of responsibility, and with it, of course, of a moral law. It does not avail for my opponent to say that “it is confined to this life,” because it is of this life that I am speaking. We have, therefore, reached a most important point in this debate, which will hereafter become the basis of further argument. Nor

will Mr. Watts escape this difficulty by dragging in predestination, for I shall be prepared to prove, if necessary, that predestination, in the sense of necessitarianism, is not taught in the New Testament.

My remarks on Pessimism were simply intended to show how well Secularism was calculated to promote human happiness—one of its most cherished objects, according to its advocates. Its founder prepares for suicide, because, with Secularistic consolation, he fears that madness may arise from his sufferings; one of the most brilliant writers who ever appeared in the movement recommends self-murder out and out; its burial service is a mournful wail over the ills of life; and the whole system is one of intense gloom. Mr. Watts thinks that he meets this case by stating that some persons holding Christian views have committed suicide. No doubt—but in doing so they followed Atheistic advice, and certainly not Christian principles. The point is, that Secularists recommend suicide, and attempt to justify the practice.

The passages quoted to show that the New Testament sanctions persecution resemble the straws which a drowning man clutches at when hope has all but fled. My opponent must have felt himself in a veritable state of despair when he seized these texts for his purpose. What any of them has to do with persecution I can't imagine. I suppose I don't do any one much harm by shaking the dust from my feet in case I am not received where I expected to be. Had the Secularists no more persecution to answer for than this, there would not be so much to complain of on that score as there is now. Then the threats on Sodom and Gomorrah, and the anathema pronounced on those who reject the Gospel, every child must see have no reference whatever to persecution in any form. And I may refuse to bid a man "God speed" without doing him any injury. For instance, I couldn't very well wish Mr. Watts "God speed" in his work, and yet I should defend him against persecution to the utmost of my power—indeed, I have done so. "Be not unequally yoked" assuredly implies no persecuting spirit. And the handing over to Satan was a purely spiritual process, involving no harm to the persons named, but good.

The passages quoted from the Old Testament respecting God's dealings with the ancient patriarchs are all foreign to the subject under discussion. At some future time I shall be happy to deal with these ; but they are not involved in this debate, and we have no time to discuss them.

Mr. Watts says that all I have put forward as being distinctly superior in Christianity to Secularism is "the fatherhood of God as the basis of love to man." This statement is astounding, as the reader must be convinced. But these are common, says my opponent, "to all phases of Theism," and, furthermore, assume "as proved the very question in debate." They are not common to all phases of Theism, nor to any phase of Theism save those which are indebted for them to the Christian Scriptures. And how does the speaking of God and His Fatherhood assume the point in debate? Are we, then, discussing the existence of God? I trow not. The Fatherhood of God is a Christian tenet, and as such I have a right to refer to it, and in so doing most certainly I do not take for granted any point in dispute.

As to the part of the New Testament in which the teachings are found that are superior to Secularism, my friend seems to forget that—(1) I contend that Secularism has no teachings of its own. (2) I have again and again stated that I take the whole of the New Testament as my guide, in that sense, of course, that it was intended. By this I mean simply that the purpose of every verse is not to teach morals ; some portions of the Book are historical, some poetic, some symbolical, and much spiritual, and therefore higher than any of these. To ask me what duty of every-day life I can perform which Mr. Watts cannot is absurd. The question is not what he can do, but what he can get any instruction or aid from his system in the doing. And this I have already pointed out more than once ; but it shall be dealt with again.

I don't care for what purpose Mr. Watts made the remarks that he did about a "spiritually-regenerated world." I only know that he advocated leaving the evils in the world simply to give us the opportunity of fighting them. The reader can see what was said by looking at previous letters.

It is perhaps hardly worth taking up time with any

further remarks on the ridiculous charge of Christians being dirty. Mr. Watts could never have been serious in instituting a comparison between them and Secularists in this respect.

As to the points of superiority of Christianity over Secularism, I think these have been brought out pretty fully already, despite the *ad captandum* remark about "fencing." I named three points in my very first letter. Two of these were shunted off the lines at once, and never since have I been able to get my opponent to deal with them. He dropped them like hot potatoes at the commencement, and has never touched them since. The other point was the question of morals, but it, too, is gone now, for, there being no responsibility, in consequence of the absence of the power of choice, there is no moral law. Hence Secularism, so far as all the issues are concerned with which I started, has vanished into thin air, gone like a dissolving view, leaving behind not even the Shakesperian "wrack."

Secularism aims at nothing, and hits it. What is its position to-day? Hear one of the most honourable and upright men in its ranks, and a man who knows what he is talking about. Mr. George Millar, one of the oldest and most prominent members of the Glasgow Secular Society, says: "I confess that I write in sorrow, for, having devoted a life-time in working to the best of my humble abilities for the promotion of Secular principles, I am bound in truth to record that, as an organisation, Secular principles are in a worse condition throughout the country now than they have ever been during my forty years' association with the party. Of this I have in my possession undeniable proof" (*Secular Review*, April 6th, 1878, p. 221). After more than forty years of effort, here is the result. And then as to what it has done in the way of diffusing knowledge. I have again and again pointed out that Mr. Holyoake decries knowledge; and here is the result. Mr. W. Lewin, a Secular writer, says: "There is absolutely no literature of a permanent character connected with the Secular movement" (*Secular Review*, April 13th, 1878, p. 225). Of course there is not. The whole of the literature of Secularism consists of a few small tracts and pamphlets. Mr. Bradlaugh not only corroborates Mr. Lewin's statement, but he even

goes a little further. He says : " I know the best ought to be on his [Dr. Harrison's—*i.e.*, the Christian] side, because on his side is all the literature, the language, the learning, and wealth of the country " (Debate with Dr. Harrison on Theism, p. 43). Thus Secularism has no literature, no language, no learning, no wealth, for these are all with the Christians. Yet this same Secularism claims to make the best of this world, while it leaves existence destitute of all that can render human life intellectually great. If all the literature and learning are to be found with the Christians, then assuredly Christianity is the highest and noblest form of Secularism.

Look on the other hand at what Christianity has done. A modern writer has well said : " Religion has been the most engrossing theme of the historian ; it has built the grandest buildings, written the most precious books, painted the most beautiful pictures, suggested the most glorious music, inspired the most illustrious men, inaugurated the most important changes of society, controlled the most far-reaching movements of mankind. Religion was the fountain-head of all the ancient arts. Literature was invented to immortalise her ethics and her prayers ; astronomy, to ferret out the secrets of her starry gods ; sculpture, to make visible her deities ; architecture, to enshrine the sculptor's work ; mathematics, to mark out her festivals, the song and dance to gladden them. It is a notable fact that even those who are at present most convinced that religion has had its day do not find any other problem so fascinating and engrossing as those furnished by her vicissitudes." Of Christianity even Lecky, an unbeliever, says : " As a matter of fact, it [the Christian religion] has probably done more to quicken the affections of mankind, to create a pure and merciful ideal, than any other influence that has ever acted on the world " ("Hist. of Rat.," vol. i., p. 358).

Secularism! what can it do? It has no rule of life about which there is any certainty, and which may not be questioned at every step, even by those who accept it as a rule. Its teaching is vague, uncertain, and, in not a few cases, evil. But, hark ! at the sounds which salute us from the other side : " I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them

that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." "Overcome evil with good." Where in the world can anything be found higher than this? But a still greater defect in Secularism is that it has no power to strengthen and aid us in those moments which occur to the best of us, when we are compelled to exclaim, with the Roman poet—

"Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor"—

fondly excusing ourselves upon the plea that we cannot do the things that we would.

Secularism is at best a thing of prudence and expediency, unstable as water, shifting as the wind, as incapable of affording a guide for man in this world as of teaching the way to attain to everlasting blessedness in the next.

And what of Christians? They rest on the sure foundation, and other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Christ Jesus the Lord—the corner-stone tried and precious. To Christ as the teacher—bright, clear, and stimulating as the sun, we go—we sit at his feet, feeling his transcendent worth, and with heartfelt love to Him, who gave and sent him, we say, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

"So, step by step, we take the height,
A patient, pilgrim band ;
We lift the burden, bear the cross,
With worn but willing hand ;
And bend to hear amid the strife
The Master's calm command,
Content, dear Lord, if thine at last
Our finished work shall stand !"

MR. WATTS'S EIGHTH LETTER.

READERS of this debate are requested to again read my last letter, and to note that therein Dr. Sexton was referred to the very paragraphs containing my replies to his objections to the principles and ethics of Secularism. But, notwithstanding these references, he persistently goes on re-asserting his stereotyped charges, as if they had never been noticed. Being desirous, before the close of this debate, to more fully examine the Christian position, I shall not repeat my answers. In response to my request that Dr. Sexton should name the statements that he considered I had not dealt with, he refers me to two urged by him in his first letter. The first of these has reference to the theory of the universe. In my first letter, however, it was shown that Secularism seeks to deal with the order rather than with the supposed origin of the universe, since it deems this course more useful. Furthermore, the monistic or dualistic theory in no way affects secular duties, which should be understood and performed, whatever theory of the universe is accepted. If Dr. Sexton objects to this course, it is for him to state the Christian theory of the universe, and to endeavour to show that it is superior to the Secular position. That would be a legitimate point for consideration in this debate.

The second statement mentioned by the Doctor is the alleged "religious instinct of human nature." It is asked, How does Secularism propose to satisfy this? Simply, by allowing every individual to worship according to his own desire, providing his action does not interfere with the rights of others. My opponent says that "worship of some kind is next to universal," and that, therefore, this want must be provided for. But surely it will not be contended that Christianity has supplied

such a provision ! Why, it is only among a very small minority of the human race that we find Christianity professed, and even here millions of persons proclaim its inadequacy to satisfy their intellectual aspirations. "Christianity satisfies this want," exclaims my opponent. Let the Jews, the Hindoos, the Buddhists, the Moham-medans, and numerous other worshippers, answer this allegation ! The question of the assumed religious sentiment in man is too large a one to discuss here, and indeed it does not necessarily come within the scope of the present debate. Accepting religion as apart from theological associations, and as understood by certain "Advanced Theists" and Positivists, it is quite possible to harmonise it with Secularism. Of course, Secularism is thoroughly antagonistic to orthodox Christianity ; but, then, there are ample means, apart altogether from this faith, of satisfying every instinct of human nature. Probably, if my opponent's "religious sentiment" were thoroughly examined, it would be found to consist principally of veneration, fear, wonder, hope, and gratitude. These, however, are purely natural faculties, and the mode of their manifestation depends upon birth, education, and locality. What would satisfy a Turk's "religious sentiment" would not suit a devotee of the Greek Church, and there is a marked difference between the religious gratification of a Hindoo and that of a European. The Catholic would regard the Quaker's religious satisfaction as very inadequate, while the Primitive Methodist would view that of the Unitarian with equal disfavour. It is the misapplication of these human faculties, through ignorance of natural laws and the power of the priesthood, that has perverted them from their legitimate functions. Secularists do not aim to destroy any human sentiment ; they wish rather that it should be properly understood, and that in its development it should be directed by wisdom and controlled by reason and science.

My opponent persists in refusing to defend the leading doctrines of Christianity. Why is he still silent upon the personality of the Devil, the vicarious sufferings of Christ, and the Holy Ghost ? Are these points so objectionable that my opponent not only "dropped them like hot potatoes," but he "has never touched them

since." I can get no answer to my interrogations—What is God's will? and Where in the New Testament are there to be found teachings superior to those cited by me in the first paragraph of my second letter? We are told that the "holiness of God" is the source of moral obligation; and when I asked what that holiness is, the Doctor replied that the acts of God recorded in the Bible "were holy" (see paragraph seven of my opponent's seventh letter). No sooner are those acts brought before Dr. Sexton than he declines to defend them. This is just what I expected; he not only avoids the defence of Christian doctrines, but he fails to explain the will of God, which, he says, is the basis of Christian ethics, and to indicate the nature of their source, sanctions, and incentives. Again I put the question, Can a man be moral without the "holiness of God," and what are the teachings of Christianity that are superior to those of Secularism? It is no answer to say that Secular teachings are not original, inasmuch as that can be urged, to say the least, with equal force against New Testament injunctions. In my first and second letters there are stated principles and teachings that all Secularists have accepted, and in paragraph three of my second letter it is shown that certain of those teachings and principles are opposed to what is taught in the New Testament. Let my opponent deal with these matters, or else acknowledge that he cannot.

It is not true that the positive teachings of Secularism have been purloined from Christianity. We claim that the present life is the only one of which we have any knowledge; that well-being in this world is our highest duty; that the only means we can rely upon to secure this object are knowledge, wise action, and experience; that conduct should be judged by its issues on earth, and that science is of more practical value than belief in any supernatural being. Surely these teachings are positive enough; but where are they to be found in the New Testament?

Of course, "thought, feeling, passion, etc.," belong to the material. Did the Doctor ever know of their manifestation apart from material organisations? In my fourth letter it is clearly asserted that material means include the use of every intellectual faculty. If material

forces cannot in all instances be calculated upon with mathematical precision, society nevertheless acts upon the principle that the operations of such forces can be calculated. It is by the knowledge of the nature and influence of those forces derived from collective experience that we provide for the future. As Professor Tyndall observes, "it is the millions of experiences of this kind which science furnishes that give our present faith in the stability of nature" (Lecture on Sound). But with what "degree of exactness" can so-called "spiritual agencies" be calculated? Who relies upon the stability of their manifestations? Will my opponent inform me?

Dr. Sexton says that Professor Jowett and Dr. Irons agree with him on all the fundamentals of Christianity. The Professor does not believe in the Fall of Man, but regards the story in Genesis as simply a poem. Is this my opponent's position? Dr. Irons says, to assume that the "written word" covers and includes all truth "is suicidal," and that it is difficult to gather from the Bible any one concise system. He further says that "the idea of a future world is, to speak truly, very little explained to us in the Scripture" ("Bible and its Interpreters"). Opposed to this, Dr. Sexton says the Bible is an absolute authority, and that it is not science, but the New Testament, that reveals a future world.

My opponent alludes to quarrelling as though no bitterness existed among Christians. Let him ponder over the following:—"Though the horrible brutalities of the Smithfield burnings are no longer allowed to terrify us, yet the different religious sects, with but few exceptions, manifest an ample portion of the savage spirit, and, as far as the bitterest calumnies and anathemas can have effect, endeavour to vilify and destroy one another" (Rev. T. Finch's Essays). Again: "Nothing can equal the dogmatism and arrogance with which one sect pronounces sentence against another, except perhaps the dogmatism with which the other retaliates upon them" (Dr. Campbell, "Spirit of the Gospel").

The Doctor's remarks upon the passages quoted by me to prove that the New Testament sanctioned persecution are amusing in the extreme. There is not much harm, he says, in shaking the dust from the feet. What,

however, is the principle that the act represents? It was a Jewish method of showing hatred to those against whom the dust was shaken. If Christ knew this, he advised improper conduct; and if he did not know it, he was neither God nor a very wise man. The anathema which follows this injunction shows that those who would not accept one particular faith were to be treated at the Day of Judgment worse than a people said to be hopelessly corrupt. This is the old orthodox notion, that Scepticism is a greater crime than immorality. How about having no fellowship with an unbeliever (2 Cor. vi. 14)? The Doctor says that he could not wish me "God speed" with my views. Quite true; but neither could he receive a Sceptic into his house if he obeyed the passage quoted: rather should he exclaim, "Let him be accursed!" It appears, according to the Doctor, that to hand Sceptical persons over to Satan will do them good. A most loving proceeding, certainly! Why, if this principle had always been acted upon, where would my opponent be at the present time? Probably participating in a *warm* entertainment, from which there would be no escape.

Dr. Sexton says that the "Fatherhood of God is a Christian tenet." Yes; but my contention is that the belief in it obtained long before Christianity. In one of his works, the Doctor himself admits that the Fatherhood of God was familiar to the Greek mind in the early history of that people ("Scientific Materialism," p. 6). Moreover, I want it to be shown that this belief is a better "basis of love to man" than the one offered by Secularism—namely, the improvement and welfare of society at large.

The defects of our movement alluded to by my opponent prove nothing against Secular principles, but reflect only upon our organisation. That this is incomplete we admit; still, with all its drawbacks, it is far superior as an organisation to what Christianity was after it had existed for hundreds of years. Secularism, as an organisation, was not known thirty years ago, and there is now hardly a town throughout the country where there is not a Secular Society, besides numerous Secularists unconnected with any organisation. Could the same be said of Christianity thirty years after its formation? As to

Secular literature, why, it permeates the whole of the productions of the Press. As far back as 1860 the *Westminster Review* for October of that year says: "The newspaper, the review, the tale by the fireside, are written almost exclusively by men who have long ceased to believe. So also the school-book, the text-book, the manuals for the study of youth and manhood, the whole mental food of the day; science, history, morals, and politics; poetry, fiction, and essay; the very lesson of the school, the very sermon from the pulpit." Dr. Herbert Vaughan, in his pamphlet on "Popular Education in England," states similar facts. Let the reader of the Freethought journals of this country and those of America study the Secular literature there advertised, and then form his or her own opinion as to the value of the Doctor's allegation. Where was the literature of the Church during the first thousand years of its existence? What scientific works did it publish, and where were its manuals containing the secular information for the people? Hear what Lecky says: "Nearly all the greatest intellectual achievements of the last three centuries have been preceded and prepared by the growth of Scepticism." Speaking of the time when the Church was in power, the same writer observes: "The study of the Latin classics was for the most part positively discouraged. The writers, it was believed, were burning in hell; the monks were too inflated with their imaginary knowledge to regard with any respect a Pagan writer, and periodical panics about the approaching termination of the world continually checked any desire for secular learning.....Not till the education passed from the monasteries to the universities, not till Mohammedan science and classical Freethought and industrial independence broke the sceptre of the Church, did the intellectual revival of Europe begin" ("History of European Morals," vol. ii.).

Dr. Sexton's concluding exhortation would no doubt be effective from the pulpit; but it should find no place in a debate. He commences his emotional peroration with a bundle of very absurd assertions as to what Secularism has not and what its teachings are, without attempting to prove one statement advanced; then he quotes some commands from the New Testament, which

neither he nor any one else can obey, and concludes his rhapsodical ebullition by extolling faith in Christ, and saying, "Thou hast the words of eternal life." Now will my opponent tell me what those words, "of eternal life," are, and where they are to be found? What are we to understand by the statement, "Other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Christ Jesus our Lord"? Is it that we can be saved only through Christ? If so, saved from what? And what is the nature of the belief we must have in Christ? According to Christianity, are we to regard him as God, or simply as a good man? Does the New Testament teach that we are to accept all, or only part, of his alleged teachings, and that all who have heard of Jesus can believe in him? If so, what secular advantages will thereby be secured that cannot be had without this said belief? On the other hand, if a person finds it impossible to subscribe to Christ's teachings, will that person in consequence be punished in another world? If so, what will be the nature of the punishment, and will it be of definite or indefinite duration?

Secularism has no vindictive punishments beyond the grave, and no vicarious atonement, but proclaims that the redemption of humanity is to be accomplished by human means alone; hence its advice:—

"Pray not, the Darkness will not brighten ! ask
Nought from the silence, for it cannot speak !
Vex not your mournful minds with pious pains ; —
Ah, brothers, sisters ! seek
Nought from the helpless gods by gift and hymn,
Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with food and cakes ;
Within yourselves deliverance must be sought ;
Each man his prison makes !"

DR. SEXTON'S NINTH LETTER.

THE feat of Cadmus is thrown into the shade, his marvellous exploit eclipsed for ever, and Mr. Watts's name may be handed down to posterity coupled in heroic and startling deed with that of the Theban King. Some of the "material means" of Secularism have been more fertile in the production of an army than were those famous teeth of the dragon, which, when sown, grew up armed *Sparti*. However dissimilar the means employed in the two cases, the result is likely to be very much the same. But yesterday Secularism was as withered and shrivelled as a mummy, as lifeless and nearly as ghastly as a skeleton. To-day, by the magical power of my opponent's wizard's-wand it is rejuvenescent, jocund, and stalwart—a veritable Titan, stalking over the land with giant strides and the bearing of Jove. Not so many years ago Mr. Holyoake—an authority acknowledged alike by friend and foe—said of it: "Why, when I go now to Glasgow, to Huddersfield, to Liverpool, to Manchester, I find the Secularists there unadvanced in position. Even in Northampton, which Mr. Bradlaugh knows, I found them lately meeting on the second floor of a public-house where I found them twenty or twenty-five years ago. In Glasgow they are in the same second-rate position they were in twenty-five or thirty years ago. What have we been doing? Does not this show an obsolete policy? Ranters, Muggletonians, Mormons, and men of their stamp, are superior to acting so. Any party, in the present state of opinion in the world, could with thought have done more. The most ordinary sects build, or hire, temples and other places, where their people decently meet. Mr. Bradlaugh, with all his zeal and appeals, finds to-day that all London can do is to put up this kind of place in which we now meet, opposite

a lunatic asylum, where people, so the enemy says, naturally expect to find us" (Debate with Bradlaugh, p. 72). And yet more recently Mr. G. W. Foote, in a letter to the President of the "National Secular Society," bewails the condition of the movement in the following terms: "Our Party is less organised now than when you assumed its leadership; mushroom Societies are constantly springing up; but what account can you give of the old ones? The very Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund, of which you make such boast whenever occasion offers, was stronger in Joseph Barker's time than now. What Secular Society is there in London where you have a platform always open, and where you, or such persons as you permit, lecture every Sunday to hundreds of people?Where is our literature? You cannot say there are no purchasers, for you trumpet their numbers every week. What books have we to compare with those which issued from the Freethought Press in the days of Robert Owen, Richard Carlile, Thomas and Robert Cooper, Joseph Barker, and G. J. Holyoake? Your last presidential address makes mention of but two, each of which will probably, at no distant date, be either used as waste paper or preserved as curiosities" (*Secularist*, June 17th, 1876). Very gloomy pictures assuredly are these two, sketched by leading men in Secularism. But now "the scene is changed." In his last letter my opponent says: "Secularism, as an organisation, was not known thirty years ago, and there is now hardly a town throughout the country where there is not a Secular Society, besides numerous Secularists unconnected with any organisation." When I read this I actually had to pinch myself to make sure that I was awake. And having decided that I was, there was no escape from the conclusion that Mr. Watts could hardly have been so when he wrote his last letter. More than once have I been accused of being reckless in my statements; well, this, I suppose, is to be looked upon as a calm and deliberate affirmation, made in Secularistic coolness, which should be the most cool of all that is frigid and icy. A Secular Society in nearly every town! Then Mr. Watts has, indeed, as I said, rivalled Cadmus; in point of fact, he has done more—he has eclipsed the Arabian Nights in the fertility of his imagination. We had a great deal of talk in political circles a few years ago

about a paper fleet, and here surely are paper Societies, or something even less substantial. I don't know how many towns there are in England—and I haven't the means at hand for obtaining accurate information—but my impression is that the number is somewhere about eight hundred. And how many Secularists are there distributed over the land? Mr. Foote has told us that all the names that could be got together at a particular Conference, at Leeds, was 1,192, and that large numbers of these had so little faith in their principles that they refused to contribute anything to the funds (*vide Secularist*, June 17th, 1876). This, then, gives about a Secularist and a half to each town. One wonders what constitutes a quorum in a Society composed of a man and a half. A Secular Society in nearly every town! Shades of Munchausen and Mendez Pinto! but this is really funny. I venture to say that, if an alphabetical list of towns be gone through, there are not five Secularistic Societies in the first hundred towns. So far from the thing being in a flourishing condition, I affirm, from my own experience, that it is, as Mr. Millar said in the quotation given in my last letter, in a worse plight than it has ever been before. Towns which were once its strongholds are now almost freed from its presence. Districts where its disciples could erst be reckoned by thousands are without Societies and destitute of places of meeting. Its most powerful organisation in the land was once to be found at Newcastle-on-Tyne. To-day there are—or were but recently—two miserably small Societies in this northern town, and their sole energies are devoted to quarrelling with each other; and throughout the whole county of Northumberland the once flourishing organisations are all in ruins. In Manchester two small meeting-places of contending factions stand side by side in the same street, from whose platforms rival lecturers denounce each other. Most of the large towns in England are persistently left to grope their way in Cimmerian theological darkness, no Secular luminary ever coming near. Even Northampton, which those who do not know better frequently point to as the hotbed of Secular unbelief, has no Society worth naming, and Sceptical lectures are rarer in the town than angels' visits are said to be to this our lower world. Secularism has had its day, such as it was,

and is now at its last gasp. The struggle, if it makes one at all, is but that which precedes its demise. We may say of it with truth what Robert Hall once said of Unitarianism, that it is a well-nigh lifeless corpse, "bleeding at every pore." A few years more, and it will be as dead as a stone, with no resurrection possible.

Mr. Watts tells us that he will not repeat his "answers" to my queries. No one desires that he should repeat anything. But what I want is that he shall deal with topics that I have again and again brought forward, but which have been persistently ignored by him. This matter, however, the reader can judge of for himself.

"Secularism seeks to deal with the order rather than with the supposed origin of the universe." Very well, then, let it explain the "order" in the absence of Intelligence, from which alone "order" can spring. Herein, I maintain, is one of its defects. Wherever there is order there is plan; wherever there is plan there is purpose; wherever there is purpose there is thought; and all thought pre-supposes a Thinker. Christianity is clear upon the philosophy of order in the universe; Secularism is a fog in which no person can see a step of the road that has to be travelled.

Then with regard to the religious sentiment in man. It has taken eight letters to induce my opponent to touch this question, except to push it aside, and even now he says "it is too large a one to discuss here, and indeed it does not necessarily come within the scope of the present debate." Does it not? But I contend that it does. And, large or small, I want to know how Secularism proposes to deal with it. In the universal practice of worship we see a want of humanity, and any system that proposes to set forth a philosophy of human life can't be allowed to ignore this. The Positivists worship a vague abstraction which they call Humanity; Professor Clifford wrote ridiculous nonsense about Cosmic Emotion, which was to supply the place of religion; and even an Atheistic supporter of Mr. Watts proposed some sort of prayer in the pages of this very journal (*Secular Review*, April 5th, 1879), showing how important this matter is considered on all hands. But, accepting religion in some new sense, "it is quite possible to harmonise it with Secularism." Then let us have the harmony, for it is

just that harmony which I deny to be possible. How can that the aim of which is to destroy all religion ever be made to harmonise with what it proposes to extirpate root and branch? That such is the aim of Secularism I have already shown, and more quotations to the same effect can be furnished if necessary. But does Christianity meet the demand? Assuredly it does, in the most perfect form conceivable. Of what use is it to talk of Jews, Hindoos, Buddhists, and Mohammedans? They all worship, and are, therefore, so far at one with Christians, and diametrically opposed to Secularists. What we maintain is, that this want of human nature is met to a certain extent in their religious systems, but not in so perfect a form as it is in Christianity, where the glorious Revelation is made of one God, one human-kind, and one mediator between God and men. Secularism, however, ignores worship, and, therefore, is utterly inadequate to supply this human need. But Secularists desire, says my friend, that this sentiment "should be properly understood, and that in its development it should be directed by wisdom and controlled by reason and science." Directed to what, when there is no object to which it tends? And how controlled? That is the very question I have been desiring to get answered throughout the entire debate. How did this sentiment arise, as it corresponds to nothing? Evolution could not have produced it, for it is out of harmony with its environment if Secularistic Atheism be true. What does it mean? Science is but a reading of nature; let her grapple with this phenomenon, read the riddle it presents, and solve the problem it puts forth.

Again I am asked, with tiring repetition, about certain doctrines of Christianity. Show me that they are doctrines of Christianity, and I will discuss them. In every case where I have ascribed any opinion to Secularists, I have supported my statement by apt quotation. Let my opponent do the same. Instead of asking me about the personality of the Devil, and such kindred topics, he should give me the passages in the New Testament in which he finds these doctrines. I am not discussing creeds nor theological doctrines, but the Christianity of the New Testament. Mind, I don't say that the doctrines in question are not there, nor that I disbelieve

them, but only that, as dogmas found in creeds and confessions of faith, I have nothing to do with them in this debate.

What is the Holiness of God? It is that Absolute Moral Perfection and Essential Purity which precludes the possibility of any defects in His Infinite Goodness. The very conception of a Perfect Being involves this. God's will, I have said before, is revealed in the New Testament, not in one passage, but in the entire Book. Christianity is not like the teachings of ancient moralists, a collection of disjointed maxims, unconnected precepts, and isolated apothegms, forming, as in Secularism, a heterogenous mass of *dissecta membra*, with no bond to hold them together, and no necessary union; but a grand system, one in aim, in purpose, in effect, in influence, and in vital power. The former are the broken fragments of an automaton; the latter is a living, moving being. And herein lies its peculiar power. Says Lecky, a writer on my opponent's side. "It softens the character, purifies and directs the imagination, blends insensibly with habitual modes of thought, and, without revolutionising, gives a tone and bias to all the forms of action" ("History of European Morals," vol. i., p. 205). It is not simply a code of morals, however perfect, but a Divine Life. "Nor even now," says John Stuart Mill, "would it be easy for an unbeliever to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract or the concrete than to endeavour so to live as that Christ would approve our life" ("Essay on Religion," p. 253). This is the verdict of all impartial history on one who, in the words of Renan—another unbeliever—"has created the heaven of pure souls where is found what we seek for in vain on the earth."

It would seem to be a boast of Secularism "that the present life is the only one of which we have any knowledge." But, assuredly, if this were so, it is nothing to cause exultation and rejoicing. We desire to know more. In all ages and in everyland men have shown the strongest tendency to inquire and speculate concerning another life. Whence this longing? Even Secularists are not free from it. Mr. Watts himself has told us that the "mysteries in which we live and move and have our being have an irresistible fascination for us, even when

we are thoroughly convinced that we cannot penetrate them" ("Secularism in its Various Relations," p. 10). And Mr. Holyoake confesses that he stands "on the shores of eternity," looking "forward with wistful and unsatisfied curiosity" ("Trial of Theism," p. 43). But if this curiosity can never be satisfied, and no answer can come to the inquiry which it prompts, clearly the fact must tend rather to mar than to make for happiness. The whole thing is admirably summed up in the German lines :—

"Ich komm', ich weiss nicht woher—
Ich geh', ich weiss nicht wohin ;
Ich bin, ich weiss nicht was :
Mich wundert dass ich so fröhlich bin."

Now, here is the superiority of Christianity seen in the fact that she has let into this world a light from beyond the tomb, and declared the Eternal Hereafter, the Home in the bosom of our God.

But suppose the present life were all, then what can Secularism, with its creed of negations, its gloomy wail over the ills of life, its defence of suicide, do to make it better? Let us have an answer to the two following questions—1. What really good thing is there in this life which a Christian is forbidden to possess? 2. What good movement is there in society in which Christian men do not take the foremost part?

"Material means alone," which Secularism employs, are now stated, by a strange misuse of language, to include "thought, feeling, passion;" etc. Then they may also include religion, and the distinctiveness of Secularism disappears. What is the use of talking about "material means alone" if there are no others? But passion, thought, and emotion are not material means, even according to Mr. Watts's own definition in his seventh letter, as "that which is calculable in its operations." This I showed in my last. The quotation from Tyndall is beside the question, since it refers to matter, not to mind. Moreover, I have asked many times in this debate, to no purpose, how "the help from prayer, or from Providence," and the "availability of supernatural aid," which Mr. Holyoake concedes to Secularists, can be included in these much-talked-of "material means." For an answer to this query I have waited patiently, as

weeks and months have gone by, but, alas ! it does not come. *Quousque tandem abutere patientia nostra ?*

Why Dr. Irons is continually being dragged into this debate, I cannot understand. What if he and I differ upon some unimportant point, or upon an important one, for the matter of that ? Dr. Irons is a Christian minister of great learning and ability ; but he is not my Pope. I am defending Christianity, not the views of any clergyman or sect.

The passages quoted to prove that Christianity sanctions persecution fail to set forth any such doctrine, as I have shown. Christ forbade His disciples to persecute (Luke ix. 55), and He breathed uniformly a spirit of love and goodness. It is Greg, an unbeliever, who says : " In reading the sayings of Jesus, we feel that we are holding converse with the wisest, purest, noblest being that ever clothed thought in the poor language of humanity. In studying his life, we feel that we are following the footsteps of the highest ideal yet presented to us upon earth. Blessed be God that so much manliness has been lived out, and stands there yet, a lasting monument to mark how high the tides of divine life have risen in the world of man " (" Creed of Christendom "). Before Mr. Watts boggles about the handing over to Satan, he should endeavour to ascertain who was the Satan referred to, and what was the nature of the discipline in question. A little careful reading of the New Testament would have helped him to a different conclusion to that very absurd one at which he seems to have arrived. That some men professing Christianity have persecuted, no one denies ; but in doing so they acted in direct opposition to the spirit of their master. Secularism, on the other hand, if Mr. Watts is himself to be believed, has occasionally been a fearful engine of persecution in the person of the very man who claims to be its highest exponent. My present opponent has spoken of Mr. Bradlaugh as a " copy of Rome's Pope," a man who " plays the despot on a small scale, and, while preaching democracy and the freedom of opinion, acts the tyrant and the bigot ;" one " to differ from whom is to commit the unpardonable sin "—and much more of the same kind. Yet these two men, and another, since dead, once blasphemously paraded themselves in photo-

graphs and advertisements as "The Secular Trinity." That Trinity became a duality, and the duality is now in open conflict. *Arcades ambo.*

The Fatherhood of God, I still say, is a Christian tenet, vaguely and indistinctly shadowed forth in heathen systems, but fully declared and realised in Christianity. How does it help my friend's position to say that I have elsewhere admitted that this was known to the Greeks? Then those old poets and philosophers were so much wiser than modern Secularists, who don't recognise it. The Fatherhood of God is the only basis for the brotherhood of man. I can discover no other. Men are not brothers, according to any system of Infidelity, nor, in fact, related in any true sense of the word. And herein lies the superiority of Christianity over Secularism. In Christ there is no distinction of race, or nationality, or colour, or sex (1 Corinthians xii. 13). When He came, a system of morality of universal application was taught for the first time in the world. Men, as men, had never been cared for by Greeks or Romans, but only prized for some quality they possessed. But now it was humanity itself as such that was elevated. Says Kossuth: "The era of Christianity—peace, brotherhood, the Golden Rule as applied to governmental matters—is yet to come; and when it comes, then, and then only, will the future of nations be sure."

Christianity teaches that each man is responsible for his acts. Secularism denies such responsibility, and therefore tends to universal anarchy and disorder. I have referred to this before, but my opponent has very judiciously avoided dealing with it. What about the "iron necessity that overrules human destiny," according to Mr. Holyoake's gospel? I shall be glad to learn how any system of morals is possible in the absence of freedom of choice. And Secularism recognises no such freedom. Indeed, Mr. Bradlaugh boldly faces the problem and denies responsibility altogether. In his debate with Dr. Baylee, this question of responsibility being pressed home, he tried hard to escape it, but could not, and the following questions and answers are recorded:—"Dr. B. Then, if any sort of responsibility exist, is not one man responsible to other men?—ICONO. If by responsibility you mean as already defined, yes;

further than that, no. Dr. B. In an important sense, is not one man responsible to another?—I. Define what you mean by an important sense, and then I will answer. Dr. B. Then, in your own sense of the word responsibility, is not man responsible to his fellow-men?—I. My own sense shuts out responsibility; therefore, no” (Debate with Dr. Baylee, p. 30). Thus responsibility has no place in Secularism, and consequently it is idle to talk of distinction between right and wrong, or between virtue and vice.

A very singular theory of morals was recently given in Mr. Watts’s own journal, which I may draw attention to here. A sapient scribe, signing himself G. F. P. Dyer, writes: “We have seen that the soul of the man is not a whit better than the mind of the dog. Both are moral so long as the brain is untouched; both immoral the moment we depress their skulls” (*Secular Review*, Feb. 5th, 1881). The cause of immorality is, it seems, then, the depression of skulls. Here is a discovery alike interesting to moralists, legislators, social reformers, and philanthropists. Surgeons must henceforth be looked upon as the true regenerators of society. I have heard of people who could not see a joke without having a surgical operation performed, but never before of vicious habits being cured by a trephine. Who will, after this, say that Secularists have made no discoveries in science? I am not, of course, very clear as to what constitutes an immoral act in a dog, and should be glad of further information on the subject. But it is something to know how to cure the vice when it is discovered. Suppose a dog to be in the habit of stealing the food intended for his betters—I beg Mr. Dyer’s pardon, the dog has no betters—well, his master; then the remedy is to remove the depression from his skull. This new Secularistic discovery ought to be made known far and wide. As for Mr. Dyer, the Government should reward him with a pension, to be paid out of the dog tax and receivable in the dog days. Clearly, a new dog star is in the ascendant.

No one can doubt that Secularism has produced some singular geniuses, and developed some very curious phases of thought—or want of thought. Mr. G. J. Holyoake has truly said: “It is the vice of Freethinking that it spreads universal uncertainty, and assumes right

and wrong to be so Protean that no man can tell one hour what he shall hold the next" ("Logic of Facts," p. 82).

One other point. What power is there in Secularism to effect a change in a man's character such as those changes which Christianity produces every day? Take the low coarse, vulgar and brutal among mankind, the men who have been trained in vice, whose moral natures have been blunted, and all love of goodness smothered by their evil surroundings, and the pernicious environment that has encircled them from birth, and tell me what Secularism can do with such persons. I reply, simply nothing. Ancient Paganism ridiculed the idea of changing such men, and modern Infidelity does the same. Says Celsus: "Those who are disposed by nature to vice, and accustomed to it, cannot be transformed by punishment, much less by mercy." "It is folly," writes Schopenhauer, "to think one can change his own character, or that of another." Secularism makes desperate efforts to bring Christian men over to her creed of negations—that is, men upon whom religion has already exercised a moral influence; but she puts forth no hand to rescue the lost and fallen. She sends no missionaries to benighted savages in foreign lands, nor to degraded outcasts at home. Is there a solitary instance that can be quoted where Secularism has rescued a human being from vice, misery, wretchedness, and insensibility to goodness? I know of none. Secularists are wise enough not to put their system to the severe test of attempting to reform such persons, for they know full well that egregious failure would be the result. To teach what is right is of no use here; a new moral force must be called into operation. First, a love of goodness must be engendered, and, secondly, a power to practise it must be imparted, neither of which is possible without religion. What can Christianity do in such a case? Hear Lecky the Rationalist: "A nature once thoroughly vitiated became altogether incapable of appreciating it [virtue], and the transformation of such a nature, which was continually effected by Christianity, was confessedly beyond the powers of philosophy" (vol. ii., p. 4). There is probably hardly a congregation of Christian

worshippers in the country that does not number among its members many men who have been thus changed. And such transformations of character abound all down the ages where Christ has been preached ; transformation not effected in years of patient self-discipline, but by a Power whose influence was as sudden as it was thorough. Christianity has won millions of converts from such classes of people. They are to be found in every town and city. I ask, what else could have reached these men so as to lift them up out of the mire in the way they have been raised and elevated ? Suppose you had talked to them about science, or philosophy, or literature, or culture, or Secularism, or moral precepts ; what think you would have been the result ? They would have laughed you to scorn, ridiculed you as a good-natured, well-meaning fool, worthy of a place in a lunatic asylum, and probably have ended by robbing you or ill-treating you. There is nothing in the world but religion that can change such people as these. And I ask for an explanation from the standpoint of my opponent. Mr. Froude, himself a Freethinker, says : " Christianity, as a principle of life, has been the most powerful check upon the passions of mankind " (" History of England," X., 390). Talk of Secularism supplanting Christianity, the idea is worthy of a maniac. Lamartine has well said : " Impiety will never destroy human worship. A faith destroyed must be replaced by a faith ; it is not given to irreligion to ruin a religion on earth ; it is only a religion more enlightened which can ever triumph over a religion fallen into darkness. The earth cannot remain without an altar."

MR. WATTS'S NINTH LETTER.

My opponent opens his last letter with the most remarkable substitute for argument against Secularism that it has ever been my unpleasant duty to encounter—I mean the allusion to Cadmus, whom the Reverend Doctor has dragged in so irrelevantly by the hair. The dragon's teeth have been sown, and, like a crop of mangel-wurzels, armed giants have sprung up, and since their appearance on the scene they have, of course, smitten Secularism hip and thigh ! On reading this profound and original mode of argument the applicability and pertinence of the following lines struck me very forcibly :—

“ Words are like leaves, and where they most abound
Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.”

Surely it requires no special *savant* in ethics to point out that principles which appeal for support to human folly obtain that warranty much more readily than those principles which appeal to human wisdom ? Christianity, which Dr. Sexton champions, made, it is said, in the reign of Ethelbert, numberless converts in one day. These were all baptised, had their big-toe nails cut, ate a ton of wafer—or sealing wax, bawled in a chorus of sanctified Latin, sneezed in the incense, hiccupped in the Eucharistic wine, and by and bye wriggled through purgatory to the doorstep, where the very truthful Peter, sentinel-like, stood with the key in hand, prepared to let in this charming herd of Christianised Saxon savages into either brave Abraham's or the humane Sarah's bosom. True, Dr. Sexton, we make comparatively slow progress—too slow, it seems, for your pace ; but perhaps we Secularists might be credited with knowing our own affairs, and we are, upon the whole, satisfied with the progress we are making. We appeal to the educated intellect

—not, like you, to the uneducated emotions. To reach, by thought-processes, the deepest and firmest mental convictions, is, we admit, a slower process than to baptise in an hour a thousand weak-minded enthusiasts, and then let them loose upon society as a nuisance, in the shape of a howling “*Salvation Army*,” canting about the blood of the Lamb, and making both day and night hideous with their ravings concerning hell and its brimstone fire. Secularists are content to pursue the even tenour of their quiet and thoughtful way. We may appear to you to go too slowly, but we envy you not your “fast” religion. We make our appeal to the thoughtful men and women of our time. Yours is the sanguineous Moody, the sulphureous Spurgeon, and the clamorous and holy Terpsichorean jigs with the “*Hallelujah Lasses*.” We are poor, but it will be time enough to taunt us with our poverty when we pretend to be rich, or when we preach a Gospel that makes poverty a test of perfection, while at the same time we try our best to get riches which the Gospel tells us constitute an impediment to the realisation of the highest object of the faith professed. Did Freethinkers many years ago meet on “the second floor of a public house”? This sneer comes with bad grace from the defender of a faith so humbly associated with obstetrics in a stable, after admission had been refused into the inn (public-house). Have we a hall in London “opposite a lunatic asylum”? Well, is this any worse than having our place of meeting inside the asylum itself, where the Christian chaplain is to be found to-day, and where some of your enemies say they should “naturally expect to find your friends worshipping”?

So far, my friend, I have followed your hostile railery. Pray do not be so undignified as to again leave the discussion of principles for such a profitless purpose. If you have said all that can be said on Christian ethics, and if you so fear the dangerous ground of doctrines that you will say nothing in their defence, then, I say, let the debate end. This would be preferable to indulging in “sound and fury signifying nothing.” There is sufficient farce and truculence in the stories of your Holy Ghost and your Jonah; your Father and your Virgin; your Ruth and your Aholibah; your Devil and your Trinity; your Fall and your Atonement; your per-

dition and your hell-fire, to convulse all the world with a queer sensation between a shrug and a hearty laugh. When, my friendly opponent, you have shown the courage of your opinions, and attempted to defend in this debate that which you preach from the pulpits ; when you are ready to discuss the Theism of your "standard of appeal," the Bible ; when you have learnt what the Holy Ghost is and what is the nature of the will of God ; when you are bold enough to essay to demonstrate the reality of a personal Devil and the justice of punishment in hell-fire ; when you can harmonise the ascetics of the New Testament with Secular duties ; then, and not till then, should you waste your time in reproducing old pointless extracts, which at no period affected Secular principles, but which, having done duty so often, have now lost their original flavour against the present Secular organisations. Do not forget that always finding fault with Secularism does not establish the superiority of Christianity, and unless you speedily give me such information as you have repeatedly been asked for in this debate, I shall consider that you belong to that class alluded to by Sir Isaac Newton in the following passage : "It is the temper of the hot and superstitious part of mankind in matters of religion ever to be fond of mysteries, and for that reason to like best what they least understand" (Horsley's Ed., vol v., p. 530).

If it were really worth while dealing seriously with the early portion of my opponent's last letter, it could be urged that the imperfect Secular organisation he referred to existed years ago. A very curious comment upon Dr. Sexton's statement appeared in the previous pages of the very *Secular Review* containing his last letter. It was there reported that in one Secular Society alone during the last year nearly a thousand additional members had been enrolled and nineteen new branches established. Besides, the very question I put to the Doctor upon this point he has not answered, namely—Did Christianity make greater progress during the first thirty years of its existence than Secularism has done in a similar period since its establishment ? Or did the Christians build more churches or chapels in the first thirty years of their religion than Secularists have halls during the last twenty years ? If they did, I ask for proof ; if they

did not—which is the fact—where is the superiority of Christianity as an early organisation? The Rev. Dr. Gregory states that the Christians, during the first two hundred years of their organisation, assembled in private houses, or in some secret and sequestered retreat, and that it was in and after the third century that they contrived to erect places of worship—that is, when they were patronised by Constantine (*“History of Church,”* vol. i., p. 118). Secularists are more advanced than that in the first half of the first century of their existence as an organisation.

Dr. Sexton still persists in saying that I ignore topics which he has brought forward. Once more I invite him to specify these, and I undertake that they shall be immediately replied to. This invitation has been given by me before, but it has only been partially accepted. The Doctor is exceedingly clever in adopting a mode of discussion pre-eminently calculated to mislead the credulous reader. For instance, he persistently refers to questions that he has introduced into this discussion, and wishes it to be understood that I have not noticed them, although my replies have appeared in due order. This was very apparent in the remarks he made in his last letter upon “the theory of the universe,” “the religious sentiment,” and “responsibility.” I have already emphatically stated that Secularism does not deny man’s responsibility to society; if my opponent advocates some other responsibility, then his duty is clearly to explain what it is, and to show that it is superior to that inculcated by Secularism. In my first and eighth letters the Secular position as to the theory of the universe was clearly put, and I asked my opponent to state the Christian theory, and to endeavour to prove it to be superior to that advanced by Secularism. To say that “Christianity is clear upon the philosophy of order in the universe” is only a mere assertion. Let that clearness be pointed out and its superiority demonstrated; then it will be my duty to show that the Secular view is the better. With a coolness that would be incredible in any one but himself, Dr. Sexton again exclaims as to the religious sentiment (and this is a sample of his repetitions): “I want to know how Secularism proposes to deal with it.” Why, in my previous letter I had told him: “Simply by allowing every individual to worship according to his own desire, providing

his action does not interfere with the rights of others.' Furthermore, I gave it as my opinion that the "religious sentiment" would be found merely to consist of certain natural faculties—such as veneration, wonder, gratitude—and to this opinion my opponent has taken no exception. If Dr. Sexton deemed my replies and my opinions fallacious, why did he not say so, instead of thus repeating this question as if no answer had been vouchsafed? But Secularists, says my friend, have no object for this natural sentiment; yes we have. We venerate the true, the noble, and the beautiful when and wherever we find them. As the Doctor himself once said, when his intellect was freer from the clouds of theological invention than it is now:—

"The trees and flowers that deck the land,
The soft and grassy mead,
The firm-set earth on which we stand,
Are worshipful indeed.

We venerate great Nature's plan,
And worship at her shrine,
While goodness, truth, and love in man
We hold to be divine."

How, says my opponent, can this sentiment be controlled by reason and science? It may be asked, with greater force, how could it be controlled without reason? This is what "I have been desirous of getting answered throughout the entire debate." "Reason is the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything—even revelation itself" (Butler's "Analogy of Religion"). What is termed the Religion of Humanity is the cultivation to the highest possible extent of the whole of human nature, and the worship of such a religion is the veneration of its loftiest and purest portions. This is in strict harmony with Secularism. In what way does Christianity meet the demand for worship of the Hindoos, the Buddhists, and the Mohammedans more than Secularism? The object of veneration is different in each case, and until Secularism denies that any object exists, Dr. Sexton has no advantage in this particular. If to venerate is a necessity of human nature, Secularism supplies it in the fullest sense. The difference is, that we satisfy our wants with the real, the known, and the know-

able, while the Doctor's satisfaction is in the belief in something he feels to exist beyond humanity. I am asked, how did this sentiment arise? I reply, in a similar way to all other sentiments. The misapplication of these natural faculties and the belief that they constitute what my opponent calls the religious sentiment, were caused, no doubt, in my opinion, in times of ignorance, by the misconception of nature and the misguidance of the priesthood. These erroneous notions being once established, they have been handed down from generation to generation, and accepted without thought or investigation. As Dryden observes :

“ By education most have been misled,
So they believe because they so were led ;
The priest continues what the nurse began,
And thus the child imposes on the man.”

Although my opponent again and again contends that there was no difference between him and Dr. Irons upon fundamental principles, at last it appears I have convinced Dr. Sexton of his error in this matter, for he now says, What if they differ? he is not defending the views of any clergyman or sect. Just so, my friend; then why do you expect me to defend individual opinions of Free-thinkers? But there is more than this in my opponent's concession of a problematical difference. Originally he stated, and this most emphatically, that among Christians there were no differences on cardinal doctrines. By quoting certain authorities, I proved that there were. Now, listen to the Rev. T. Campbell, who says he could “show by examples that we ministers do *not* agree among ourselves on even prominent doctrines; that we are far from thinking alike on what are deemed by some among us *absolute essentials*—such as the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, Miracles, etc.” (Debate “On the Unity, Duality, and Trinity of the Godhead,” p. 23).

My opponent's answer to the proofs I furnished in favour of persecution being sanctioned by the New Testament is to quote a passage of an opposite nature. This is debating with a vengeance! The veriest novice in discussion would detect the weakness which here underlies my opponent's position. I do not blame him

for not refuting my argument on persecution, because that he could not do; but it would have been more manly to have admitted what his knowledge of the New Testament must have taught him, that it does contain passages which sanction persecution for the rejection of Christianity. In reference to my "boggles about the handing over to Satan," and my opponent's advice that I should carefully read the New Testament that I may arrive at a different conclusion, I would say, let Dr. Sexton frankly state what other conclusion I could have arrived at except an erroneous one. We want no attempt at throwing dust in the reader's eyes; no attempt to mislead, because Dr. Sexton finds himself in a difficulty or a dilemma. If my conclusion is wrong, let me know the right one; no equivocation or evasion is permissible. Truth is higher than prejudice, and frankness more noble than innuendo. Again, it is admitted that the question is not that of men who have called themselves either Christians or Freethinkers having persecuted; but does Christianity or Secularism sanction their action? I have given chapter and verse in the New Testament wherein the persecuting spirit is discoverable, but Dr. Sexton has not produced a single line from our principles that in the most remote manner sanctions persecution, or which can be twisted to serve the would-be persecutor with an excuse. Which, then, is the better system—Secularism or Christianity—if judged by their fundamental principles and their bearing on persecution?

The only "Fatherhood of God" that my opponent can claim as a Christian tenet is that depicted in the Bible. What is that? Very briefly, this:—A Father who possessed infinite power made his children so weak that they were unable to withstand the first temptation which the same kind Father had premeditatedly exposed them to; and to aid their fall, this Father makes an extra-dangerous serpent to expedite his children's lapse from virtue. The result of this characteristic parental action was that wickedness increased upon the earth, whereupon this Father, with whom all things are possible, decided to send a flood that should drown alike the innocent and supposed guilty. By and bye people again multiplied, and this Father, who is, we are told, all love, frequently ordered the wholesale massacre of his

children—men, women, and infants—upon the most trivial pretences, raising up nations only to have them utterly extirpated. Moreover, this Father, who is no respecter of persons, selects one nation to be superior to, and above all others on the face of the earth; and herein he shows bad judgment, for the very people of his choice frequently manifested that they were among the worst and most perverse of the “sons of men.” Ultimately this Father decides upon a plan of salvation (upon which I shall further deal hereafter) which only includes a small section of his children, and by which the few only are to be saved, while the vast majority are to be lost. No marvel that Dr. Sexton refuses to discuss the character and doings of the Bible God, and yet this is the being he exalts Sunday after Sunday in his sermons. Talk of the “Fatherhood of such a God,” why no human parent would be guilty of such cruelty, partiality, and folly as that which the Bible ascribes to the object of my opponent’s worship. “Better have no opinion of the gods at all than cast such discredit upon them.” And this we are told is the “only basis of the brotherhood of man.” Oh, theology, thou dost indeed blind thy victims! The brotherhood resting on such a basis must be most exclusive and cruel in the extreme. Where was the brotherhood of the Christian fraternity exhibited under the Inquisition, the Star Chamber, and during the establishment of the Christian faith in America? Where is it to-day? Its nature was partially shown in my last letter from the testimony of Christian writers, which the Doctor has been clever enough to avoid noticing. That nature and its influence are further displayed in the following citations from writers on my opponent’s side:—“Wyvil, in his work on ‘Christian Intolerance,’ says, in 1809: ‘The barbarities which professed Christians have committed, under the name of wholesome severities against unbelievers, and even against their own brethren of the same faith, exceed in horror whatever acts of sanguinary cruelty have been perpetrated by tyrants of every other species. And such deeds of cruelty and injustice have been sometimes committed, not by pretended believers of the Gospel, but by men sincerely attached to it.’ Chandler, in his ‘History of Persecution,’ exclaims: ‘What confusions

and calamities, what ruins and desolations, what rapines and murders, have been introduced into the world, under the pretended authority of Christ, and of supporting and propagating Christianity ! In the seventeenth century Dr. Scott, in his 'Christian Life,' says of the five hundred Christian sects which he believed then to exist : 'It is five hundred to one but that every one is damned, because every one damns all but itself, and itself is damned by four hundred and ninety-nine.' Bogue and Bennett ('History,' ii., 362) say that 'jealousy, detraction, and persecution, are the sure attendants of a revival of religion "' (quoted by Evan Powell Meredith in his "Prophet of Nazareth"). Finally, where will be the brotherhood at the Judgment Day? Simply confined to the handful of believers in Christianity. "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my father, which is in heaven" (Matthew x. 33). Personally, I have no wish to share in that brotherhood which we are told will be shown by Jesus who will be "revealed from heaven," "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. i. 8, 9).

Dr. Sexton defines the "Holiness of God" as being "Absolute Moral Perfection," "Essential Purity," and "Infinite Goodness." These are high-sounding phrases, well calculated, no doubt, to please orthodox believers and to gratify their ears ; but what can be their importance in this debate, unless it can be shown that they represent the God of the Bible? That such holiness cannot be claimed for the Christian Deity, has already been shown in paragraph nine of my seventh letter. Therein I adduce chapter and verse to prove that, according to the Bible, the holiness of God has neither morality, purity, nor goodness. The reader is asked to again read the Biblical references given in my seventh letter, and to compare the texts there cited with my opponent's definition. Why does not Dr. Sexton manfully grapple with the passages I have produced? The answer is plain ; because he cannot reconcile them with ethical science ; and yet my opponent is such a

slave to emotional theology that he sacrifices intellectual consistency at the shrine of orthodox belief. Finding himself once more driven to bay, Dr. Sexton, instead of telling us what the will of God is, says it is revealed in the whole of the New Testament. This looks like arguing in a circle; however, if this is as stated, then it surely follows that everything recorded in that book must be in accordance with God's will? Therefore, it is his will that we should take no thought for our lives (Matt. vi. 25); that we should not lay up for ourselves treasures on earth (Matt. vi. 19); that we should resist not evil (Matt. v. 39); that we should set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth (Col. iii. 2); that we should love not the world (1 John ii. 15); that if we offend in one point of the law, we are guilty of all (James ii. 10); that we are to obey not only good but bad masters (1 Peter ii. 18); and that it is good morality to say, "What, therefore, God hath joined together let no man put asunder" (Matt. xix. 6); that we should swear not at all (Matt. v. 34); that we cannot go to Christ except the Father draw us (John vi. 44); that we are to labour not for the bread that perisheth (John vi. 27); that we are to hate our own flesh and blood (Luke xiv. 26); and that, finally, those who leave their families for the "Gospel's sake" shall be rewarded here and hereafter (Mark x. 29, 30). According to the Doctor's definition, it is God's will that men should believe a lie, that they all might be damned (2 Thess. ii. 11, 12); that the world cannot be saved by any name except that of Christ (Acts iv. 12), yet the majority of mankind have never heard of Christ; that salvation should be obtained through faith and *not of works* (Ephes. ii. 8, 9); that the sick are to rely upon the "prayer of faith" to save them (James v. 15); that if any two Christians agree upon something, and send a supplication to heaven for that something, it shall be granted them (Matt. xviii. 19). Now, these are but a few samples of what my opponent terms God's will, upon which he bases a perfect system of morals. Where are the people who will dare to accept these teachings as the basis of their moral conduct? Does my opponent, for instance? I think not; on the contrary, his whole life, his undoubted secular activity, are protests against the efficacy of such teach-

ings? Talk no more about the uncertainty and impracticability of Secular ethics, but let my opponent defend his own orthodox professions, and show that they are in harmony, not merely with poetical ebullitions and ascetical dreamings, but with the practical and stern realities and requirements of every-day life, and with his own daily existence. Let a careful study be made of many of the passages above quoted, and also of those cited in paragraph three of my second letter (which the Doctor has never answered, although I have repeatedly asked him to do so), and let it be supposed that it was possible to honestly act upon them; and it will then be seen how those who succeeded in framing their conduct upon the teachings there prescribed would be able to take an active, foremost part in the philanthropic movements of society, and what really useful things in this life they would be deprived of.

The question of "material means" must remain where it is until my opponent answers my question put to him in my last letter—namely, Did he ever know the manifestation of "thought, feeling, passion, etc., apart from material organisation"? The quotation from Tyndall referred to both mind and matter, and not, as the Doctor says, to matter alone.

The effects of Christianity on individuals and nations will, on account of space, be dealt with in a future letter. I shall proceed to notice the extremely subtle manner in which my opponent chooses to deal with the doctrines of his faith. In the first place, it is to be observed that he absolutely—at least, for the present—refuses to discuss them, and then he subsequently offers to do so, provided they are shown to be contained in the New Testament. Ingeniously, but not ingenuously, Dr. Sexton says that he does not deny that they are to be found in that book. Well, for satisfaction's sake, I will furnish him with chapter and verse for those doctrines, although—as my opponent well knows—the result will be to considerably abbreviate my impeachment, since it will encroach on my space.

First, then, let me deal with the alleged superior feature of Christianity in its possession of an "eternal hereafter." If a future life be a reality, and not a mere imagination, then I affirm that there is nothing in Secularism to pre-

vent Secularists from participating in it. (See principle six in paragraph one of my second letter). What is the nature of the Christian's future life? Its heaven, as described by St. John in Revelation, is a most undesirable place, and is in too close proximity to a burning hell to be pleasant. The holy angels, we are told, could behold the sufferings of the lost souls (Rev. xiv. 10). The one condition requisite to enter heaven is belief in Christ. Will my opponent tell me (1) what is the belief in Christ? and (2) if I *cannot* believe in him, do I deserve the penalty provided for unbelievers? What is that penalty? Punishment in hell! For New Testament proof of this see Matthew xiii. 42, xxv. 30 and 46; Mark ix. 44; Revelation xiv. 10, 11, xxi. 8. I now ask Dr. Sexton is such punishment as is here mentioned either just, humane, or moral? Can he point to anything so barbarous and revolting in Secularism? Besides, apart from its utter cruelty and barbarity, is not the scheme of punishment disproportionate and ineffectual? It makes no distinction between the thoroughly bad man and the individual, who, perhaps, has committed but one "fault," that of rejecting the Christian faith. At the "last day" all nations are to be gathered together and to be divided into two classes, the sheep and the goats (no gradations of crime are here recognised)—the one to be sent into life eternal, and the other into everlasting punishment (Matt. xxv.). Horace's advice is far preferable:—

"Let rules be fixed that may our rage contain,
And punish faults with a proportionate pain."

This Christian scheme destroys the true principle of all punishment, which should be corrective, not punitive. It comes too late for correction, inasmuch as when a "lost soul" is once cast into hell there will be no opportunity afforded it for reformation. I may, perhaps, venture to ask for a plain answer to a plain question—namely, does my opponent honestly believe—even after the recent revision—that the New Testament teaches the existence of a personal Devil; and, furthermore, that this devil is the acknowledged monarch of that self-same hell into which the merciful Deity will hurl, without distinction, those who die unbelieving and unrepentant?

With respect to the assumed Atonement through the blood of Christ, I would ask whether or not Christ's vicarious sufferings have effected the redemption of mankind? Moreover, was it just on the part of his Father thus to make, or allow, the innocent to suffer for the guilty? Human justice turns with abhorrence from the very notion of such a substitution. Was Christ a part of the Godhead? If he was, and is, then are the Wesleyans right when they sing—

“O Love divine, what hast thou done?
The immortal God hath died for me”?

In conclusion, I must remind Dr. Sexton that to merely deal in generalisations, and to give quotations from writers in favour of his opinions, in no way disproves my position, or proves his, to be correct. We want facts and proofs, not merely opinions, in this discussion. Nothing would be easier for me than to fill my letters with extracts from eminent authorities in support of my position. Dr. Sexton's rhapsody about his unique morality can be profitably compared with the following sober truth written by Buckle: “To assert that Christianity communicated to man moral truths previously unknown argues on the part of the asserter either gross ignorance or else wilful fraud” (vol. i, p. 164).

DR. SEXTON'S TENTH LETTER.

IN an editorial note appended to Mr. Watts's last letter I am informed that future letters must be limited to "about two columns." This is manifestly unfair, and would seem to indicate that my opponent had had enough of the debate, and was anxious to bring it to a close. Mr. Watts has no more right to dictate to me regarding the length of the letters than I have to him. And he evidently feels this; hence, in announcing his decision, he lays aside his polemic character, and for the nonce assumes the dignity of the editor. But neither in one capacity nor the other is he entitled to take upon himself summarily to decide as to how much shall be written, without consulting me. I am perfectly well aware that our arrangement at the commencement was to limit each letter to about two columns. But Mr. Watts was the first to infringe this rule, as can be seen by turning to the early letters. Indeed, I made a reference to it, and in reply was informed that I could have as much space as I desired. Now, I am told I cannot. It is unimportant. I will try to keep this letter within the prescribed bounds, and I trust my opponent will in future do the same.

He will excuse me if I say that his last letter seems to me to have been intended rather for a platform exercise than for a written controversy. There is an abundance of rhetorical flourish; but of argument an infinitesimal amount. My opponent grows warm, excited, wild, and rash. No doubt some of his periods would have brought down the house if addressed to the *oi polloi* in a Secular hall; but to a calm and dispassionate reader, looking for logic and reason rather than rant and fustian, the result will be somewhat disappointing. "The sanguineous Moody, the sulphureous Spurgeon, and the

clamorous and holy Terpsichorean jigs with the Hallelujah lasses," would provoke deafening applause if raved out, with proper gesture and sufficient strength of voice, to an audience composed of the unthinking rabble, and might be appropriate to Mr. Holyoake's "howling department" of Secularism ; but in a written debate something different is expected.

A whole column of Mr. Watts's letter is occupied in rebutting what is called my "sneer" at the little progress Secularism has made. But if there was a sneer at all, it was assuredly not mine, but Mr. Holyoake's. The "public house" and the "lunatic asylum" are from him. My opponent should, therefore, vent his lofty indignation not on me, but on his friend, the founder of Secularism, from whom I quoted the observations that seem to have given so much offence. "We appeal," says Mr. Watts, "to the educated intellect—not, like you, to the uneducated emotions." *Risum teneatis amici?* For proof, read Mr. Watts's last letter, where the "uneducated emotions" are kept in view in pretty nearly every sentence. I should like to see a Secularistic teacher who appeals to the "educated intellect." Such a *rara avis* has not as yet crossed my path. The following statement is astounding : "We are upon the whole satisfied with the progress we are making." Then what means those long wails of dissatisfaction which I have already quoted from leading Secularists? One after another of them has lamented, in tones of hopeless despair, the wretchedly slow progress that Secularism has made, which is a strange comment upon Mr. Watts's assertion. But did Christianity progress faster at the first? There is an account in a very ancient book, of three thousand converts being made within forty days of the event upon which the Christian Church is based (Acts ii. 41). Let that be the reply. It is doubtful if the Secular Societies number three thousand to-day. But, says Mr. Watts, "in one Secular Society during the last year nearly 1,000 additional members were enrolled." I shall be glad if my opponent will tell me—1. Is the Society referred to a Secular Society *pur et simple*, and not rather a political organisation for the support of one man? 2. Is the Secularism which it espouses such as Mr. Watts would approve of? 3. What is the test of membership?

4. Does Mr. Watts believe that the number stated is correct? and, if so, where can I obtain a list of the members? The "Secular Society in nearly every town" seems to have been quietly dropped, as I expected it would be. It is rather cool of Mr. Watts to talk about rashness after that wild statement of his. The tone in which he says "we may be credited with knowing our own affairs" would seem to imply that no one else had any right to give an opinion about them. But, in reply to this, I assure my friend that I know something about their affairs too; and even if I did not, the statements made in this debate have been taken from Secularistic authors. Of course, my opponent does not agree with them, for have I not already shown that no two of them are agreed about anything?

Can it be possible that Mr. Watts thinks he has not ignored topics brought forward by me? He speaks on this subject so confidently that one is almost inclined to imagine him to be serious. It is a matter, however, of which the reader can judge for himself. But have I not asked several times during this debate how my opponent's attitude can be compatible with the advocacy of a system that "does not question the pretensions of Christianity"? Let this be answered. What is Mr. Watts's last letter but a long tirade against the Christian religion?—and all this on behalf of a system that "does not question the pretensions of Christianity"! *Ex eodem ore calidum et frigidum efflare.* And this is always a distinguishing characteristic of Secularistic teaching. Mr. Holyoake's statement is a reply to Mr. Watts. Then take responsibility: I have asked many times, but to no purpose, how a system which denies freedom of choice, as Secularism does, can be reconciled with any system of morals. Will Mr. Watts kindly turn to the passages that I have already quoted from Messrs. Holyoake and Bradlaugh on this subject, and let me know what he thinks of them? In his last he says: "Secularism does not deny man's responsibility to society." But Mr. Bradlaugh does most emphatically deny every kind of responsibility, as I showed in my last.

And those "material means" which Secularism prides itself in claiming as its own peculiar property, I can't get explained. I ask again—1. Are there any means

which are not material? If yes, what are they? If no, then why does Secularism talk about confining itself to these when there are no others? 2. Do "material means" include thought, passion, emotion, etc.? Whether these are ever seen apart from material organisation has nothing to do with the question. Are they material? is what I want to be informed. 3. Do these material means include "supernatural aid," which Mr. Holyoake recognises as legitimate for Secularists to believe and trust in?

In reference to the religious sentiment, Mr. Watts says: "What is termed the Religion of Humanity is the cultivation to the highest possible extent of the whole of human nature, and the worship of such a religion is the veneration of its loftiest and purest portions." Here let me ask:—1. In what sense is this cultivation a religion? 2. Does such cultivation include Secularism among the means of culture, and, if so, is it not higher than Secularism, upon the principle that the whole must be greater than a part? 3. In what sense is the veneration of any thing a worship? 4. What is the outward form that this veneration takes? 5. As the "loftiest and purest" portions of humanity are to be worshipped, what worship is provided for these pure and lofty personages themselves to engage in? 6. Can this substitute for worship be shown ever to have been sufficient to satisfy the religious sentiment? As to my opponent's idea of the origin of the religious sentiment, it is miserably inadequate to account for the facts. Worship of some Being higher than man is universal. To say that this is a "misapplication of natural faculties" is to explain nothing. 1. What natural faculties? 2. How has it happened that, in all ages and in every land, the same misapplication has arisen? 3. If human nature everywhere has been in error, what guarantee for truth is there anywhere? The talk about Mohammedans and Buddhists is beside the question. They all worship; and Christianity covers the whole field of the religious instinct. It includes the truths contained in all other religions, and many more which are peculiar to itself. Secularism ignores them all, and is, therefore, totally unsuited to man.

The Fatherhood of God, I have said, is the foundation of the brotherhood of man. This Mr. Watts denies.

Will he, then, give us some other? How can men be brethren, in any sense of the word, according to Atheistic Secularism? Let me have an answer to this.

As to persecution, I have clearly shown that Secularism persecutes, while true Christianity does not.

In my last I mooted a very important subject—viz., the incapacity of Secularism to influence for good the low, degraded, sinful, and brutal among mankind. Mr. Watts has wisely avoided this. I ask him once more if he can point to me one man who has been rescued from vice, misery, degradation, and sin, by Secularistic teaching. Secularists never tire of trying to convert Christians. Why do they not try their system upon those whom Christianity has not reached, and who are altogether insensible to the beauty of morality in any of its forms?

It can hardly be expected that I should give an explanation of numerous passages of Scripture in the two columns to which I am now unfairly limited. But it does not matter, for every Sunday-school teacher is able to interpret those quoted by Mr. Watts more correctly than he has done.

MR. WATTS'S TENTH LETTER.

DR. SEXTON appears to be determined not to discuss Christianity, but simply to content himself with nibbling at, and finding fault with, the individual opinions of Secularists and Freethinkers. The discussion is nearly concluded, and yet my criticisms of my opponent's principal positions remain unanswered.

In my last letter it was shown (1) that a system based on emotionalism was calculated to win temporary adherents more readily than principles having for their basis argumentative recommendation; (2) that Dr. Sexton had not attempted to defend certain New Testament teachings which I alleged to be inimical to man's welfare; (3) that no effort has been made to show that the Christian's teaching as to the order and origin of the universe is superior to that of Secularists; (4) that no power more potential than reason to control the sentiments and actions of mankind has been indicated by my opponent; (5) that serious differences of opinion *do* exist among professing Christians as to the value of the Bible as a "court of appeal," and also in reference to the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith; (6) that Dr. Sexton cannot produce from Secular principles any sanction whatever in favour of persecution, while I have furnished passages from the New Testament endorsing and recommending persecution; (7) that the "Fatherhood of God," as taught in the Bible, is often so cruel and partial that my opponent has not hitherto essayed to defend it; (8) that the New Testament teaches no "brotherhood of man" for those who do not receive the Christian belief (see seventh paragraph of my last letter); (9) that the "holiness of God," according to the Bible, is neither moral, pure, nor good; (10) that no definition of "God's will" has been given by my oppo-

ment, whose evasive reply to my repeated request for a definition has involved him in the difficulty presented in the eighteen passages quoted in the eighth paragraph of my last letter ; (11) that Christianity has no advantage over Secularism in reference to an alleged future life ; (12) that the Christian teaching as to future punishment is cruel, disproportionate, ineffectual, unjust, and inhuman, to which nothing analogous is to be found in Secularism ; (13) that the doctrine of the Atonement is inconsistent with, and opposed to, the principles of justice and utility. Upon the last three points some important questions were put to my opponent, to which he has given no reply

Now, in these thirteen positions lies the gist of my objections to the Doctor's claim for the superiority of Christianity to Secularism, which, instead of himself answering, Dr. Sexton again leaves to his shadowy favourite, the "Sunday-school teacher." If the argument in my letter is, as my opponent asserts, so infinitesimal, why, then, does he not answer it, instead of wearying his readers by merely talking round the question, in the apparent hope of misrepresenting Secular principles?

My opponent's last letter contains ten paragraphs, to which I will reply *seriatim* :—

Paragraph 1. Dr. Sexton can have six columns of this journal if he will undertake to answer the objections urged by me in this debate against his system, and, rather than he shall have any excuse for not doing so on account of space, three pages for each of his concluding letters are freely placed at his disposal. Moreover, at the conclusion of the present discussion, I am willing to debate, either with Dr. Sexton or with his "Sunday-school teacher," any or all of the following questions :—Bible Theism ; the fallacies and contradictions of Bible teachings ; the Atonement ; the Trinity ; the Future Life and its requirements, as taught in the New Testament ; the Christian teachings on prayer and providence ; and the influence of Christianity on civilisation. Thus it will be seen that I have not "had enough of the debate" in the sense of being convinced of the alleged Christian superiority.

Paragraph 2. I was neither "excited, wild, nor rash," but I was determined to let the readers see the work

Dr. Sexton had to do, and how cleverly he could avoid doing it.

Paragraph 3. The innuendo that Secularist lecturers do not appeal to the "educated intellect" needs no refutation from me. Those who have any doubt as to the truth of my assertion can visit our lecture halls and judge for themselves. If this is considered an insufficient test, let twenty frequenters of our halls be selected, and the same number of attendants at my opponent's chapel, to discuss between themselves the subjects and teachings which they have heard expounded at their respective resorts. I shall be content to abide by the issue as to on which side the "educated intellect" will be found. Yes, upon the whole, we are satisfied with the progress we are making. The "wails of dissatisfaction" mentioned by my opponent bore reference only to the condition of Secular organisation years ago, when orthodox bigotry was more powerful than it is to-day. Secular activity and Freethought progress have since then sufficiently weakened the persecuting spirit of the Church, so that Secular adherents to-day number thousands where a few years ago they could only be reckoned by hundreds. The gain of three thousand converts, mentioned in Acts ii. 41, is a curious instance to quote in proof of the progress of Christianity. Were those "converts" believers in the Christianity taught to-day? Let the subsequent verses in the same chapter decide. Besides, was the mode of conversion adopted to be relied on? Did the three thousand know the nature of the faith they accepted? Where, at that time, was the New Testament? We are told that "fear came upon every soul" (Acts ii. 43). A fit condition to be in, truly, to enable any one to judge of the truth and value of any system! No wonder that the conversion was not followed by any great beneficial results. Despite this manifestation of the holy spirit, we read in the New Testament that strife, quarrelling, deceiving, and defrauding were among the vices of the early converts (Luke xxii. 24; Matt. xx. 24; Acts xv. 39; 1 Cor. vi. 6—8). Similar conversions to that quoted by my opponent frequently occur at the present time, only to be followed, however, by backsliding. Is not the Secular mode of conversion vastly superior to this? We seek to win the affections

through securing the assent first of the reason and judgment ; not, as the orthodox Christians do, to arouse fear and terror, and then secure the convert, when reason is dethroned and judgment suspended. The Secular principles of the Society to which I referred in my last letter I do approve, and I see no reason to doubt that the number of members is as publicly stated. Even if it were true that some of the members of that Society do not act up to their teaching, that does not make Secular principles inferior to Christian ; for where is the Christian who thoroughly acts up to the teachings of the New Testament ? How many more times are we to have the unfounded statement repeated that no two Secularists “agree about anything” ? Regard for accuracy, if not for fairness, should prompt my opponent to be less reckless in statement. So utterly incorrect is this that I have several times challenged Dr. Sexton to show any difference among us as to the principles of Secularism given by me in the early portion of this debate. Let him, if he can, do so in his next letter, or for ever cease misrepresenting principles that he cannot refute.

Paragraph 4. The boasted list of topics brought forward by my opponent, which he says I have ignored, is not yet given, but the reader is left to “judge for himself.” Yes ; and he will so judge, and the verdict will not be very favourable to my opponent, unless he speedily make good his boast. The fact is, there is no question affecting Secular principles that I have not answered. If this is not so, let my opponent produce proof to the contrary. I am not concerned in this discussion to defend the views of certain individuals as to the negative policy of Secularism, responsibility, and the freedom of the will. Apart from specified teachings, members of Secular Societies are allowed to follow their own judgment upon speculative topics. After stating its general positive principles, the British Secular Union distinctly says : “On all questions outside these positive principles of Secularism, members are free to hold any opinions, and to promulgate such on their own responsibility.” There is not one Secular Society in this country whose principles condemn its members for combatting orthodox errors, or affirm that man has no

freedom and is not responsible to society. Why, then, does my opponent continue to harp on opinions of individuals, and describe such views as Secularism? There are many professing Christians who entertain views on religion that Dr. Sexton will not defend; and if I asked him to do so, he would probably say, my business is with the principles of the New Testament; so, I reply, my business is with the principles of Secularism, as cited in my second letter, to which principles all Secularists adhere.

Paragraph 5. As to my opponent's questions in reference to material means. Material, in its strictly philosophical sense, of course includes all manifestations of matter, whether cognisable as sensation, thought, emotion, etc.; and of matter we can know nothing beyond these manifestations. But as Christians have chosen to superadd to the material an "immaterial" existence (*e.g.*, the "soul" apart from the body) and "immaterial" functions (*e.g.*, the "soul's" enjoyment or the reverse in another world), Secularists use the term material to denote the experiential as opposed to the supra-experiential.

Paragraph 6. (1) In either its etymological or general sense, the cultivation, to the highest possible extent, of the whole of human nature is a religion. The religion of Dr. Sexton enjoins, "Worship the Lord thy God," etc.; but surely my opponent is not so intolerant and irrational as to say that worship and effort directed towards any other object than his own particular God are no religion at all? (2) Does Dr. Sexton's religion embrace Christianity, including besides a moral code not necessarily Christian? and, if so, is his religion not higher than Christianity, upon the principle that the whole must be greater than a part? (3) In what sense is the worship of anything not a veneration, seeing that virtually the words "worship" and "veneration" convey the same idea? (4) The outward form of Secular veneration is not fantastic postures and sacerdotal haberdashery, but rational and practical obligations to the conditions which go to produce and to sustain "the cultivation to the highest possible extent of the whole of human nature." (5) Humanity is not simply the *homo sapiens* of the naturalist, but includes all external that concerns *homo sapiens*;

consequently there is always a limitless field left for the worship and effort of even the "most pure and lofty personages." (6) "Substitute for worship" is an unwarrantable begging of the whole question. Yes; it is quite sufficient to satisfy the "religious sentiment." I, as a Secularist, answer for myself; and I know of no Secularist who feels that he must superadd to his Secularism a complement of Dr. Sexton's religion "to satisfy the religious sentiment." The other questions in this paragraph were answered in the fourth paragraph of my previous letter.

Paragraph 7. The foundation of the brotherhood of man, from a Secular point, is the recognition and application of the just principle that individuals should not work merely for their own good, but for the well-being of general society, and that all mankind should have an opportunity of sharing in whatever conduces to their highest welfare. How can this be achieved if we accept the Bible teaching of the "Fatherhood of God"? (See paragraph seven of my last letter).

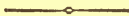
Paragraph 8. Answered in the early part of the present letter.

Paragraph 9. Secularism, as far as circumstances permit, uses the means which experience approves, to make the object of commiseration no longer "low, sinful, and brutal." It insists on a noble and elevated life, and seeks to make such a life possible by improving conditions that mould it, and imparting confidence to character which ennobles it. With Christianity this life is only a secondary affair, and a death-bed repentance is quite sufficient to secure a blessed immortality for the very persons whose lives have been a disgrace to themselves and injurious to others. My opponent insists upon belief in Christ as a *sine quâ non* of moral regeneration; thousands, however, cannot accept this belief, and millions of others have not even the opportunity of doing so, even if they could. The capability of Secularism as a reforming agency is shown in the fact that whoever accepts its principles, and acts up to them, is a more useful member of society for so doing. But, says my opponent, "can you point me to one man who has been rescued from vice, misery, degradation, and sin by Secularistic teaching?" Certainly I can. There are

many Secularists throughout the country who are ready to assure the Doctor that they owe their moral improvement to the power of Secular principles. Is it not the fact that the elevation effected in the name of Christianity is, in reality, the result of the power of the purely Secular side of it? The devil is a Christian institution; the policeman is a Secular one. What effect upon such a place as the Seven Dials, for instance, would the devil have, *minus* the police? The devil in *statu quo*, but the police withdrawn, would Dr. Sexton, with the preaching of the Gospel at his command, trust himself to the honesty and morality of the "low and brutal"? Which is the more potent in keeping people honest in "Christian England," the civil law or the Gospel? How is it that, as a rule, our criminal population—the low and brutal—have been recipients of Christian education, and that Secularists are rarely, if ever, convicted of crime? Are not the police more potent in preventing crime than the teachings of all the doctrines in Christendom? Weak, indeed, is the theologic "boy in black," but mighty is the legal "boy in blue."

This letter, having already exceeded the length intended, the further reply to the Doctor's argument on the deterring and elevating effects of his faith is reserved to my next.

DR. SEXTON'S ELEVENTH LETTER.



MR. WATTS, in this discussion, arrogates to himself an authority—on one point at least—to which by the rules of debate he is in no way entitled. Upon what principle does he take upon himself to dictate what shall be the length of his opponent's letters? In my last I complained that he had appended an editorial note to his ninth letter, stating that in future only two columns could be allowed. Nevertheless, I gave way, and promised to keep within the prescribed bounds, expecting of course that my opponent would do the same. He has not done so, his very last letter occupying very nearly four columns. But, apparently feeling the injustice of this, he now says that more space shall in future be placed at my disposal. I suppose I ought to be very grateful and to touch my hat, and say I am very much obliged to you, Sir, for your kindness. This excessively considerate permission does not come in an editorial note, but in the body of the letter, showing that Mr. Watts evidently looks upon himself as a sort of dictator of terms. Suppose I turn round and tell him that he shall only have so much space at his disposal, I can easily understand the look of blank astonishment that would come over his countenance. Fie! Let us have no more of this arrogance. Unless the original rules are kept to—and Mr. Watts was the first to break through them—I have the right to what space I please, without asking anybody's permission to take it. In the debate we stand on equal terms.

We are nearing the end, and yet I defy any person, from reading what has been written, to discover what Secularism is. Mr. Watts, I know, has given us all sorts of maxims and apothegms and so-called rules of life which he says constitute this new-fangled "ism." But I have again and again shown that the major part of these

were in existence long before Mr. Holyoake was born, and that they are no more Secularism than they are Buddhism, or Confucianism, or St. Simonism; that others are rejected by leading workers in the Secularistic movement; and that the residue are simple negations.

Mr. Watts advocates Secularism as opposed to Christianity, and in doing so he takes every opportunity of condemning the latter. But Mr. Holyoake, as I have pointed out half-a-dozen times in this debate, declares that Secularism does not question the pretensions of Christianity. On this matter my opponent is very judiciously silent in every letter. Does he not see that the very fact of his being engaged in this debate proves that he is no Secularist, as Mr. Holyoake understands the term?

In my last I put a number of questions, to which I very naturally expected clear and explicit replies. But, despite the fact that Mr. Watts took up more than the space which he had himself prescribed, I find them mostly unanswered. And I am accused of "nibbling." But assuredly, if there is any nibbling in the matter, my opponent is the Grand Chief Nibbler to the whole of that tribe, if we may judge by the way in which he deals with Christianity. I will again go over the paragraphs *seriatim*, and follow Mr. Watts's numbering of them for the sake of reference:—

1. This simply refers to the length of the letters, which I have already referred to. Mr. Watts, however, introduces into his reply a challenge to another debate. Well, he can be accommodated. I have never shirked discussion yet, and I am not likely to lose my courage after this encounter. But as he and I have already had numerous meetings of this kind, perhaps some other champion of Negations can be induced to come forward in defence of his *non credo*—say Mr. Holyoake; or the outside M.P. for Northampton; or the last big-fish caught in the Secularistic net, the Marquis of Queensberry. I have never debated with a lord; the sensation would, therefore, be a new one. Yes, that is it. I must really encounter in polemic fray the noble President of the British Secular Union, the man who once talked to Lord Beaconsfield, and induced his Lordship to say,

"Yes, I do." I feel my dignity rising already at the bare idea of the thing.

2. Mr. Watts denies that he was excited, wild, or rash. Then he is really a fine actor, for a better imitation of wildness and rashness I never saw than is to be found in that melodramatic rant about the "sanguineous Moody, etc." In any case, it could hardly be meant for argument.

3. I but spoke my experience of Secular teachers, although I should not have said a word on the subject but for that high-faluting talk of my opponent about his appeals to the "educated intellect," and ours to the "uneducated emotions." No class of men in the world appeal more to the feelings of their hearers than Secular lecturers, and yet they so persistently assert that they always address the intellect, that, I suppose, like the drunken man, who thinks everybody intoxicated but himself, they have come to believe in the truth of what they say on this score. *Insanus omnis furere credit cæteros*. Any reader of this debate is in a position to judge for himself of this matter. Mr. Watts still reiterates his satisfaction at the progress that Secularism is making. In that case, he is thankful for very small mercies. I know the movement quite as well as he does; took a part in it before he was heard of; and come often enough into contact with it to-day; and I say emphatically that it is declining, and that most rapidly. Let my opinion go, however. I have already given quotations enough from leading Secularists themselves in support of my view. But these bore reference to "years ago," says Mr. Watts. How many years ago? Mr. Foote's wail was written in 1876 (*vide* Letter Nine), and Mr. Millar's doleful lamentation in 1878 (*vide* Letter Eight), and they both point to the same state of things as that which Mr. Holyoake had so piteously bemoaned in 1873. Secularistic progress is, like that of the proverbial Irishman, backwards. How is it that we hear no more of the Secular Society in nearly every town? My opponent quickly dropped that hot potatoe, and he will not be induced to pick it up again. In reference to the great additions made last year to the "National Secular Society," Mr. Watts knows well enough that, if the assertion be true—and I must confess that I should like to see some proof of it—the

whole thing is a political organisation, having as little connection with Secularism of the Holyoake type as with the Irish Land League. I asked four questions anent this Society, two of which (numbers one and three) remain quite unanswered, and another (number four) is only partially replied to. In answer to number two, Mr. Watts says that he does approve of the principles of the Society. Then why did he leave it, and form an opposition organisation, thus weakening the movement? After what we have read from his pen in the pages of the *Secular Review* during the last few years, it will cause no little surprise now for us to be told that he approves of the principles of the National Secular Society. The reference that I made to the three thousand converts to Christianity in one day was in answer to the taunt that at the commencement its progress had not been greater than that of Secularism. This is replied to, not by facing the facts, but by miserable quibbles about the circumstances, conditions, etc., and asking such ridiculous questions as where the New Testament was at the time. Why not ask what dress the converts wore and what they had for dinner? The fact of the large increase to the Church remains, so that more were added in one day than Secularism has gathered together in thirty years. But these new converts, we are told, had faults, such as a tendency to quarrel, etc. Well, no one maintains that they became morally perfect in twenty-four hours; but how does that affect the question? Moreover, Secularists are hardly the people to complain, with any degree of consistency, of strife in others, for their entire history has been one of discord and dissension.

4. The topic dealt with in this paragraph was mainly responsibility. Why does not my opponent honestly grapple with this question? I have shown by quotation that Mr. Bradlaugh denies every kind of responsibility, and surely it will not be disputed that he is an authority in Secularism? And yet, in the very paragraph in which Mr. Watts professes to reply to this part of my letter, he passes quietly over the whole thing, and says, with an audacity that is perfectly astounding, "There is no question affecting Secular principles that I have not answered." Secular principles! Are we, then, to understand that

the grave question of human responsibility is in no way involved in Secular principles? Why, it lies at the foundation of every system that claims to have any sort of pretence to be capable of adding anything to our knowledge of human life. And Secularism is not concerned with it? Just so. What better proof can we have that such a system is unphilosophical in theory and useless, not to say pernicious, in practice. True, Mr. Watts tells us that he is "not concerned to defend the views of certain individuals as to the negative policy of Secularistic responsibility and the freedom of the will." But this is an unpardonable equivocation, to use the mildest possible phrase. Responsibility and human freedom are questions of vital moment, and they are not to be dismissed by a wave of the hand in this nonchalant way. One charge, therefore, that I bring against Secularism—and it is a very serious one—is, that it denies freedom and responsibility. I have already given passages in proof of this, and more can be supplied if necessary. Now, where there is no freedom there can be no distinction between right and wrong; and virtue and vice are terms as inapplicable to man as to a sewing machine or a watch. And where no responsibility is recognised nothing can ensue but anarchy and chaos; and order and government become simply impossible. It is almost too late to expect my opponent to deal with this subject, as he has carefully avoided it all through the debate.

5. In reference to material means, I asked three questions; no sort of reply is given to the third of these. In answer to the others, we are informed that material "includes all manifestations of matter, whether cognisable as sensation, thought, emotion," etc. It would be interesting to know upon what principle thought and emotion can be considered matter. Let my friend apply the terminology of matter to thought when he wants to describe it, and see in what a pretty fix he will find himself. But as "material means" include all means, what a farce it is to tell us that Secularism confines itself to these, and that this is one of its distinguishing characteristics! How, in the name of all that is rational, could it do anything else? But "Secularists use the term material to denote the experiential as opposed to the supra-experiential." Sir William Hamilton—no mean

authority—tells us the word experiential or empirical is used in contradistinction to that which is obtained by inference or reasoning. So Secularism, confining itself to the experiential, excludes all subjects reached by reason, and is clearly, therefore, unreasonable. Experiential ! Why half the facts of science lie outside the domain covered by this word. Who has ever had any experience of the First Law of Motion, which is described as uniform in velocity and rectilinear in direction ? Indeed, the very atoms themselves, over which Materialists make such a mighty fuss to-day, lie beyond the domain of the “experiential,” as do the ether which scientists call in to explain so many of the phenomena of the universe. Experiential—

“ I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word.”

But I have asked many times, and I do it once more, almost in despair of getting a reply, whether the “help from prayer or from providence” and the “supernatural aid” which Mr. Holyoake permits Secularists to avail themselves of, are also included in the “material means” of Secularism ?

6. Mr. Watts tells us that “in either its etymological or general sense the cultivation of the whole of human nature is a religion.” I shall be glad of some authority for this definition. But supposing it to be correct, Secularism is not such cultivation, for it leaves the greater part of the human being untouched, since it makes no provision for his noblest aspirations and highest ideals. What the following means I am at a loss to conjecture : “The religion of Dr. Sexton enjoins, ‘Worship the Lord thy God,’ etc. ; but surely my opponent is not so intolerant and irrational as to say that worship and effort directed towards any other object than his own particular God are no religion at all ?” His own particular God ! Is Mr. Watts then a Polytheist ? There can be but one God. Worship directed towards some other object ! What object does Mr. Watts refer to ? He knows well enough that Secularists do not worship at all, and that this is what I consider one of the great defects in their system. A true philosophy of life must take into account every part of human nature, which Atheistic Secularism does not. I asked in my

last (2), does such cultivation (as had been before referred to) include Secularism, and, if so, is it not higher than Secularism, on the principle that the whole is greater than a part? No answer. In the place of a reply comes the following question: "Does Dr. Sexton's religion embrace Christianity, including besides a moral code not necessarily Christian? and, if so, is his religion not higher than Christianity, upon the principle that the whole must be greater than a part?" My religion does not *embrace* Christianity. My religion is Christianity, and the moral system is a part of it. This is Mr. Watts's peculiar method of answering questions. Then I asked (3), in what sense is the veneration of anything a worship? Again no answer, but the following question: "In what sense is the worship of anything not a veneration, seeing that virtually the words, 'worship' and 'veneration,' convey the same idea?" But this I most emphatically deny. I venerate great and good men, wherever I find them; but I worship God alone. No doubt, worship includes veneration, but it also includes much more. Let Mr. Watts tell me whether he approves of any kind of worship, and, if so, what is its nature, seeing that he is an Atheist. (4) What is the outward form that this veneration takes? Answer: "The outward form of Secular veneration is not fantastic postures and sacerdotal haberdashery, but rational and practical obligations to the conditions which go to produce and to sustain 'the cultivation to the highest possible extent of the whole of human nature.'" But this latter is not worship in any sense of the word. How can the cultivation of human nature be worship? (5) As the loftiest and purest portions of humanity are to be worshipped, what worship is provided for these pure and lofty personages themselves to engage in? Here is Mr. Watts's answer: "Humanity is not simply the *homo sapiens* of the naturalist, but includes all external that concerns *homo sapiens*; consequently there is always a limitless field left for the worship and effort of even the 'most pure and lofty personages.'" This is a new definition of humanity with a vengeance, and the inventor of it must be—to follow Mr. Watts's Latin—*sapientum octavus*. So humanity includes all external things that concern man. Then, of course, trees and stones, and rivers and

oceans, and suns and comets, and clouds and rain, and everything in earth and heaven, is included in "humanity," for they all concern man? Mr. Watts should at once communicate his new definition of humanity to the Philological Society, and take care that the next dictionary contains so remarkable a discovery. It is extraordinary how ignorant we have all been of the meaning of this simple word up to the present time. (6) Can this substitute for worship be shown ever to have been sufficient to satisfy the religious sentiment? This is answered in the affirmative, but no proof is given save Mr. Watts's own personal experience. I say unhesitatingly that it did not satisfy me when I was a Negationist, and my experience is that of every other man who has escaped from the dark, dreary caverns of Scepticism. But personal experience is, perhaps, worth little. The fact that in all lands and in every age men have worshipped, proves conclusively that the religious instinct is inherent in man. And, if this be an error, we have no guarantee for truth anywhere, for nothing is more universal. Moreover, the substitutes which to-day Sceptics feel themselves compelled to resort to, for the purpose of meeting this want is the strongest testimony to its existence. Professor Clifford, an Atheist of a very dogmatic type, invented the name Cosmic Emotion to express some sort of devotion to Nature, which was to take the place of religion. And Comte, Atheist as he was, saw that a system that did not endeavour to satisfy the religious instinct could not hold together, so he proposed the worship of abstract Humanity, what his followers practise up to the present time. Miserable as those substitutes are, they are higher than anything that Secularism has to offer.

7. The Fatherhood of God is the foundation of the brotherhood of man. I asked how men can be brethren in any sense, according to Atheistic Secularism. The following is the reply: "The foundation of the brotherhood of man, from a Secular point, is the recognition and application of the just principle that individuals should not work merely for their own good, but for the well-being of general society, and that all mankind should have an opportunity of sharing in whatever conduces to their highest welfare." My opponent evidently cares very little for the legitimate meaning of words, or accu-

racy of expression. What has all this to do with brotherhood? The word brother has so definite a meaning that there can hardly be any mistake about it. Every one knows that it implies a common parentage. With the Christian this is found in God, who is the Father of all; with the Secularist it is discovered nowhere. Even humanity, in his view, had not a common origin. The talk about working for the good of others is just so much empty pretence, for Secularism has nothing peculiar to offer to the world on this score; no new suggestion to make as to how it is to be brought about; no foundation on which to rear the superstructure; no means of enforcing what it teaches; and no great living examples to point to. In these respects, it is even inferior to Paganism; and how lamentably that failed every reader of history knows. Despite the great and illustrious teachers of ancient Greece and Rome, the philosophy of Plato, the ethics of Aristotle, the moral teaching of Socrates, and the high principles of virtue inculcated by such men as Epictetus, Seneca, and the rest of the Stoics, the age got worse and worse, until a poet, in despair, cried out:—

“Ætas parentum, pejor avis, tulit
Nos nequiores, mox daturos
Progeniem vitiosiore.”

“Such,” says an able writer, “was the wail that was rising to heaven from every quarter of the Roman world when Christ was born in Bethlehem. And from that hour, when first He gathered around Him a company of Galilean peasants, men felt and knew that that life from above was stirring among them. The light of the Sun of Righteousness had risen on the night of the world, and its radiance could not be hidden. The strength and hope and gladness of those on whom it shone came before the eyes of men, and they asked in wonder what this new light might mean. And even now, as we read the pages on which are inscribed the annals of the early Church, we find the stream of Christian life, that has now made eighteen centuries glad, leaping into light with a bounding freshness, that forces us to ask from whence it springs” (Professor A. S. Wilkins). Let Secularism prevail, and again the world will sink into moral darkness and spiritual night.

8. Mr. Watts repeats the absurd statement that the

New Testament teaches persecution. This I most emphatically deny. It teaches the very reverse, as I have shown. And no one has complained more bitterly of Secularistic persecution than Mr. Watts himself, and few men, if his statements are true, have suffered more from it.

9. I have asked to be shown cases where Secularism has rescued men from vice, misery, degradation, and sin. Mr. Watts now says that he knows of such cases. Well, let us have only one. In point of fact, Secularists make no attempts to reach such people. Where are the missionaries that they send into the courts and alleys and back slums of large towns, where vice festers, and pollution enters into the very heart's core of society? Was such a thing ever heard of as a Secularist visiting from house to house with a view to raise the fallen and save the lost? Secularistic orators bawl out their platitudes in halls where none are admitted who cannot afford to pay; for the rest, those who have neither the means nor the inclination to be taught, there is no Secular remedy. If Secularists really desire to do the much-needed work of rescuing the vicious from the evil influences operating upon them, why do they not send messengers of mercy, as Christians do, into the dens of misery, instead of perpetually trying to make converts from among Christian men, who are already confessedly under moral influences? They will not do this, for they have no message to carry, except to tell the poor lost ones that nobody has any free will, and that, therefore, every one does what he cannot avoid doing; that the world is very bad, and full to the brim of misery; and that when all else fail, suicide is still open to the despairing and broken-hearted.

As this is my last letter but one, I will briefly contrast these two systems.

1. *Theory of the Universe.*—Christianity says that the world was made by God; that His wisdom planned, His power upholds, and His loves watches over all creation. Secularism says that, there is no God; there may be a God; we do not know whether there is a God or not; a belief in many Gods was superior to a belief in one; man is responsible to God; man is not responsible at all. Mr. Watts has told us that Secularism deals with the order of the universe. I asked, in reply, for an ex

planation of that order, in the absence of intelligence. To this I have received no answer, and do not expect any.

2. *Worship.*—Christianity declares the true object of worship. Secularism denies worship; tolerates worship; ridicules worship; proposes prayers to it does not know what; declares there is nothing to pray to; and that prayer is a waste of time.

3. *The Future Life.*—Christianity reveals the future life, and points out to man how he may attain to everlasting blessedness. Secularism says there is no future life; the future life is unknown; Christianity has no advantage over Secularism in reference to an alleged future life; the future life is a curse; the future life is desirable.

4. *Morals.*—Christianity contains the most perfect moral code that the world has ever seen. Even Sceptics, such as Renan, Greg, Lecky, etc., admit this. Secularism teaches that there is no guide but nature; that nature is immoral and no guide at all; that conscience is a guide; that conscience is no guide whatever. It has purloined the system called Utilitarianism, and completely spoiled it in the process of fitting it to the negations with which it cannot be made to square.

5. *Responsibility.*—Christianity enforces the doctrine that man is responsible to God first, and to his fellow men afterwards. Secularism denies all responsibility, and would, if universally adopted, lead to such disorder as would render human society impossible.

6. *Freedom.*—Christianity teaches that man has a freedom of choice in his actions, and that both right and wrong are possible to him. Secularism reduces him to a machine, with no power over his conduct, and binds him in the iron chains of destiny.

7. *Progress.*—Christianity urges its disciples to aspire after a more perfect state; to press forward in the direction of purity, holiness, and truth. Secularism has no standard of progress, no guide which it can follow, and declares that a perfect state is undesirable, because it would leave no evils to be combatted.

8. *Change of Character.*—Christianity promises to man spiritual help, by means of which he may subjugate his evil passions and wrong desires. Secularism leaves him to the fates and the furies, with no power to aid him in becoming a better man.

I have not given references for the above statements as to the heterogeneous and contradictory character of Secularism, simply through want of space. But most of the points are proved by quotations already given in this debate.

Secularism is "a thing of shreds and patches," consisting of elements that have no cohesion and no bond of union. It is as powerless to produce any real change in society as an ant to direct an army. Like the fly on the carriage-wheel, it exclaims: "See what a dust I make!" but the leaders of thought smile in pity at its arrogance, and move on. It is a whimsey of the day, which serves to amuse for a time a few crotchety people, good harmless folk in their way, but usually terribly deficient in any conception of a grand ideal, any aspiration after a high spiritual state, any perception of that lofty region which is the special province of genius, and in which all poetry, all art, all music, have their birth. Born of the earth, it never rises above the most matter-of-fact of material things, and for these it has no philosophy to explain them, no power to control or direct them, and no penetration to see deeper than the most superficial parts of their surface. It has no real life, and can have no permanence. It came but yesterday, and to-morrow its place will be filled by some new chimera, when it will be buried in that oblivion where are entombed so many kindred idle vagaries. This shadow of a shade of a real thing to endeavour to overturn Christianity and take its place! as well think to quench the stars with a glow-worm or put out the sun with a wax taper. The religion of Christ has withstood the attacks of armies, senators, emperors, councils, conclaves; brilliant genius has aimed its shafts against it; conspiracy has attempted to overthrow it; false and treacherous friends have plotted against it; but it has been proof against them all. The ravages of time have made it brighter, and it has increased in might and influence as the ages have rolled on. And does any one believe that so puny and contemptible a thing as this Atheistic Secularism can harm it? The idea can hardly exist in the brain of the wildest Atheist, or the most bitter opponent of religion. The force of absurdity could no further go.

MR. WATTS'S ELEVENTH LETTER.

DR. SEXTON'S last letter appears to me to be the most striking instance of misdirected controversial astuteness that has come under my notice during twenty years' experience of public debate. The reader is requested to note that at the very commencement of my last letter appeared a definite statement of the essential points that should be discussed between us, with a repeated reminder to my opponent of certain questions previously put to him which remained unanswered. These points contained the very gist of my objections to the system that Dr. Sexton undertook to defend. Instead of dealing with my indictment and replying to my interrogations, he reiterates, in a most "rash" and "wild" manner, statements that I have already dealt with, after which, in what is certainly a unique specimen of special pleading, he accuses me of "arrogance" and "astounding audacity." The proverb says: "Hard words break no bones," and my opponent's adjectives are more sounding than effective. Throughout the whole of his exceedingly long letter the reader will look in vain for the refutation of a single one of my arguments, or for the introduction of a new idea in support of Dr. Sexton's own position. Having read and weighed it from beginning to end, I find it contains nothing hitherto unstated, and that it is little more than a string of bare assertions and misrepresentations, which are as undignified as they are impotent. So far as contributing to the settlement of the questions at issue is concerned, the letter is simply "sound and fury signifying nothing." I cannot think that the careful reader of this debate will be finally misled by Dr. Sexton's continual fencing and his adapting the Falstaffian policy of claiming a victory where he has not really confronted his antagonist's weapons. Asser-

tion—as has often been remarked—is not argument ; neither is persistent evasion honest debate. Talk about “arrogance” and “audacity” ! surely my opponent has shown himself the “grand chief” in all such vainglorious ebullitions, by seeking to induce the readers to believe that he has replied to my arguments and once for all refuted the claims of Secularism. After all, the poet expressed a wish for a real good when he cried :—

“Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursel’s as ithers see us !”

Will Dr. Sexton mention where he has dealt with my allegation as to the incompatibility of certain New Testament teaching with the secular duties of life as cited in my second letter ? Where is the answer to my charges against orthodox doctrines based on the New Testament ? and which form the major portion of the Christianity my opponent preaches from the pulpit, but is unwilling to defend in debate ? Where in this discussion can we find any explanation as to what the Holy Ghost really is, or any attempt made to defend the Bible teachings of the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the holiness of God ? (See seventh paragraph in my ninth and the second paragraph in my tenth letters.) When and where has Dr. Sexton replied to my questions in reference to belief in Christ, the Christian mode of salvation, and the cruelty and injustice of the New Testament teachings of a future life ? Why is it that my opponent will not manfully grapple with these points —points which are so essential to the system he supports ? Frankly, in my opinion, he dares not make the attempt, he being by far too practised a disputant not to see how very indefensible these Christian teachings are. I appreciate his intellectual discrimination, but I fail to admire his persistency in clinging to figments which no reason can explain, and no ingenuity consistently defend. Let us have no more charges of “arrogance” and “audacity” urged against me while these glaring “sins of omission” stand on record against him. If I may venture to warn him from his own sacred book, the New Testament, I would say : “First cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye”—that is to say, the mote which he fancies he sees in mine. Of course,

if my opponent persists in ignoring the defence of the principal Christian positions, he must do so ; but he should not presume upon the credulity of his readers and then, with a flourish of trumpets and a self-satisfied air of having defeated his antagonist, assume a mock heroism. Dr. Sexton's many presumptions in this discussion, his repeated misrepresentations of Secularism, and his high-faluting charges against his opponent, forcibly remind me of one who writes with an "audacity" which orthodox "arrogance" only inspires, for such "arrogance" frequently makes men recklessly bold.

As soon as it was discovered that the Editorial Note limiting the last two letters on either side wounded the sensitive nature of Dr. Sexton, the limitation was immediately removed, although up to that period about equal space had been occupied by each disputant. If my tenth letter was longer than that of my opponent he amply compensated for it in his last, which was nearly double the length of my previous letter.

Dr. Sexton says : "I defy any person, from reading what has been written, to discover what Secularism is." This, of course, is not "arrogance" and "audacity," but pure orthodox modesty—that modesty which has long been so marked a characteristic of Christian apologetics. Again and again I have intimated that Secularism relates to man's improvement on earth apart from any necessary consideration of any form of theology whatever. Its principles were fully stated in my first, second, and third letters, wherein I also included their moral basis and their advantages over orthodox Christianity. Those principles are endorsed by the authoritative principles of every Secular Society throughout the kingdom, and corroborated by every Secular advocate in the country (see paragraph tenth of my sixth letter). Upon these there is no disagreement among Secularists, their differences of opinion existing only upon questions outside our fundamental principles and on modes of policy ; and in the history of the Christian Church we also find analagous variations on so-called scholastic points, and a great variety of theories of Church discipline, constitution, and government. The case, however, is very different with my opponent and his friends. With them, as I have shown in paragraph five of my ninth letter, differences obtain on "absolute

essentials" of Christianity; and this fact is even conceded by Christians themselves. We admit that all Secular teachings are not original; neither are the ethics and doctrines of Christianity. But we are not discussing the originality of the one or the other, but rather which is the superior system. Nevertheless, Secularism has this in its favour—it accepts only those teachings of the past that are reconcileable to reason, in harmony with modern requirements, and that can be usefully carried out in every-day life; moreover, it grants to each and all the right to reject whatever is opposed to this end. Not so with Christianity, which necessitates, under the penalty of punishment hereafter for rejection, the acceptance of the whole of the teachings of the "Word of God," which was written at a period when human wants and general ideas of existence were very different from what they are at the present time. Besides, many of the teachings of the Bible are not only thoroughly contradictory in their nature but they are also surrounded with and supplemented by traditional and ceremonial fetters which make them indeed hard to be understood, and impossible to be thoroughly reduced to practice. Yet these very fetters are, in many instances, regarded by the Church as essentials to the faith. Secularism has no such restrictions, having no authority, and requiring no sanction but those of reason and the welfare of general society. But if the reader is unable to discover from this debate what Secularism is, have we reason to think he is in a better position as regards Christianity? Let us endeavour to ascertain whether or not Dr. Sexton has in this discussion explained his system in such a manner that the reader can understand it, or can even suppose that my opponent is himself quite clear as to what he is trying to defend. In his first letter he says that Christianity is in the New Testament, but that "the whole system is summed up" in Luke x. 27. Now, the teaching in this verse—namely, love to God and love to man—is not peculiar to Christianity; it existed long before the Christian era, and is believed in to-day by persons altogether outside the Christian pale. Christianity must be something more than this, or it has nothing new or distinctive in it; and my opponent appeared to discover this, for subsequently he admitted that whatever is in the New

Testament is Christianity. According to this admission, therefore, the belief that all mankind must, to secure future happiness, accept one particular faith ; that a personal Devil and the Holy Ghost exist ; that there is a place called hell, with a real fire that is to burn those that believe not "for ever and ever," constitute a part of Christianity. In vain have I repeatedly asked my opponent for an explanation of these features of his system. Furthermore, the New Testament teaches that only a comparative few of the human race will be saved, and that the many will be lost ; that certain persons were predestined to condemnation "of old ;" that man of himself is impotent for good ; and that he cannot go to Christ unless the Father draw him, and that, if he do not go, he will be damned. Has Dr. Sexton ever attempted to make these matters clear? No, indeed ; but rather has he used his opportunity in reproducing old orthodox platitudes, and pointing out what no Secularist questioned—namely, that Secularism is not perfect. Then, again, as to Christian morals ; their source, we are told, is "the holiness of God," and their foundation the "will of God." The latter (see paragraph eight in my ninth letter) my opponent has been unable to harmonise with ethical clearness and justice, and the former I have shown from the Bible to be so very *unholy* (see ninth paragraph of my seventh letter) that Dr. Sexton, to use his own phrase, has dropped it like a "hot potato." The basis of love to man, says my opponent, is the "Fatherhood of God ;" but what explanation has he given of the Bible description of that Fatherhood as cited by me in my ninth letter? None whatever, and yet, "with an audacity that is perfectly astounding," Dr. Sexton accuses me of not having stated what Secularism is. Let him use the space still at his command in making clear his own system, and then allow the readers to decide for themselves whether or not they can "discover what Secularism is." With my opponent Christianity is a mere name given to a number of incomprehensible doctrines which he cannot explain, and upon which he remains "very judiciously silent" in every letter, so far as their defence is concerned ; while its ethical teachings are a jumbling up of certain "maxims and apothegms," some good, others bad, and many very indifferent, clothed in

a theological garb that no one can understand, and that even Christ himself would be ashamed of were he now among us.

I advocate a Secularism that is opposed to the errors, but not to the truths, of Christianity, and I hope always to take every proper opportunity of condemning the shams of theology, and acknowledging and supporting the good and noble in all systems. The fact that another Secularist adopts a different policy to mine is no more an argument against Secularism than that some Christians deem teetotalism a Christian duty, while others think the very opposite, is a proof of the weakness of Christianity. I will now notice Dr. Sexton's paragraphs *ser. atim*, and follow, as he has done, the numbering of them, for the sake of reference :—

1. I did not "challenge" Dr. Sexton to another debate, but simply expressed my willingness to discuss Bible Theism, the Atonement, and other Christian doctrines, inasmuch as he has failed to deal with these topics in our present encounter. True, we have had "numerous meetings" in debate, but not to discuss the above subjects. I fear, however, there is little hope of getting my present opponent to discuss the questions named ; they are good enough to preach about, but not sufficiently sound for controversy. Should he, however, be induced to try the experiment, he will find me at his command. To Dr. Sexton's remark anent "other champions," etc., I can only reply in a similar strain : let him induce the Earl of Shaftesbury, or any other "big-fish" of Evangelicalism to confront me on a public platform or in the Press, and I pledge myself to encounter such a champion, and to defend Secularism against his attack.

2. Nothing that my opponent can say in this discussion would make me "wild" or "rash ;" it may amuse me, and possibly, in some instances, cause me to regret that he, having become the victim of emotional weakness, should depart from the truth and embark on the sea of theological mystery without the compass of reason to guide him, or without any clear idea of his final destination. My rashness, indeed ! What about Dr. Sexton's excited raillery of the "wizard's wand, rejuvenescent, jocund, and stalwart, veritable Titan," etc.? This was mild orthodox argument, of course ! At least, my "san-

guineous Moody" allusion did include a point, showing the inconsistency of preaching a Gospel that condemns riches, while the preacher uses his best efforts to become as rich as possible. On this matter my opponent "is very judiciously silent"—and I do not doubt that his silence was quite as eloquent as words could be on such a matter.

3. In this paragraph Dr. Sexton gives it as his opinion that Secularism is "declining, and that most rapidly." This, like many other of my opponent's notions, is entirely opposed to general facts and to my own knowledge. Never in the history of Secularism were there half so many enrolled members in its ranks as there are at the present time; the circulation of its literature is more than treble what it was five years ago; its staff of lecturers has largely increased in number, and the audiences at Secular meetings are more than double what they were in former days. That Secularism is rapidly progressing and permeating all classes of society, is really admitted by our opponents. For proof of this statement, and for undoubted evidence that Secular progress is as I have stated it, the reader is referred to the latter part of my "History of the Rise, Progress, and Triumph of Freethought," and also to my recently-published pamphlet, "The Spirit of the Age: is it Secular or Christian?" The space at my command in these letters is too limited to allow of the reproduction here of the many facts furnished in the publications named. The quotations given by my opponent from Secular writers, which he supposes justify his allegations, I must again remind him refer only to the question of Secular organisation, and not to Secular principles. As to the three unanswered questions specified by Dr. Sexton, my replies are: (a) that the principles of the Society alluded to are strictly Secular, and the mode of expounding those principles I am no more called upon to defend than my opponent is to defend the policy or advocacy adopted by the Primitive Methodists, a denomination for which he sometimes preaches. (b) I am willing to subscribe to the printed principles and rules of the said Society. (c) The list of members is given periodically in the organ of the Society. The formation of the British Secular Union was not in consequence of differences of opinion upon

principles, but upon the *modus operandi* of organisation. If my opponent regards this as an objection to Secularism, what has he to say to the fact that in the sixteenth century the Congregationalists, to which he belongs, separated from the Established Church of England, mainly because of differences respecting church government and organisation? The many Christian sects existing to-day conclusively prove that unison of opinion on the question of organisation is certainly not a Christian virtue. Dr. Sexton entirely ignores the point of my reply to his alleged "three thousand converts to Christianity in one day." It is not the question of "moral perfection in twenty-four hours," but (a) where was the Christianity, as it is taught to-day, for them to be converted to? (b) Did the alleged converts know the nature of the faith to which it is said they were converted? (c) If they had this knowledge, were they, according to the account itself, in a fit mental condition to arrive at any rational conclusion upon it? Their "Christianity" had but few of the features that are allied with that term in this age; we are told, moreover, that they "had all things in common." Let my opponent say where are their emulators in the Christian Church of to-day.

4. Touching responsibility. Most certainly I have dealt with it, in my fourth and seventh letters, and therein stated that I do believe in responsibility, and also what I mean by the term, and to what that responsibility refers. To this no answer has been vouchsafed, but the reckless statement has been repeated that "Mr. Bradlaugh denies every kind of responsibility." In his debate with Dr. Baylee, and in reply to that gentleman's question, "Is a man so far responsible to society?" Mr. Bradlaugh replied: "If by responsibility to society you mean that every citizen should contribute to the well-being of society, and aid in the prevention of crime, yes." The charge brought against Secularism, that it denies responsibility and freedom, is not true, as in this debate I have admitted both; and to say that I carefully avoided these questions is the opposite of fact, and is, therefore, misleading. When and where has Dr. Sexton told us what he means by freedom, and why has he not answered my charge against the orthodox position urged by me in paragraph six of my seventh letter upon this head?

5. Dr. Sexton begs the whole question in reference to material means? Does he believe in an "immaterial something" apart from matter and its manifestations? If so, what is that "immaterial something"? Thought—mental action—is a property of matter, and depends on the material organisation for its manifestation. My opponent says: "It would be interesting to know upon what principle thought and emotion can be considered matter." If they can be so considered, it is by the Doctor himself. I described them as cognisable *manifestations* of matter. These manifestations my friend wilfully or otherwise confounded with matter itself. But, as "material means" include all means, what a farce it is, then, to urge religious pretensions to means which are not material! Again, in reference to the experiential question, my opponent gravely informs us that "half the facts of science lie outside the domain covered by this word." According to him, it is not experience that teaches us that, if he thrust his hand into the fire, it will be burnt. No, that is only *inference*. Dr. Sexton will grant that all men are mortal; but he tells us we know that truth, not from experience, but from inference. Whence, I ask, is the inference derived but from experience? And can any agency in human improvement or general civilisation be cited of which mankind has had no experience? Why, the very generalisation my opponent brings forward as transcending experience will convict him out of his own mouth. The first law of motion declares that a body in motion will continue to move in a straight line and with uniform velocity. He seems to say that it is the law that so moves, and, had I followed his example of word-twisting, I should have devoted several lines to refute the idea of the motion of a law of motion. But let that pass. I ask him whether this law is not based entirely upon experience. Is it not a fact that our experience of bodies in motion, our experience of friction, our experience of resistance, etc.; our calculations based upon the assumed truth of this law and verified—is it not a fact that these alone are the *data* leading to this generalisation? I shall appreciate my friend's thanks for teaching him the word "experiential" when he gives me some reason to believe that he is willing to understand it. Mr. Holyoake does not say, in the

passage quoted by Dr. Sexton, that "help from prayer or from Providence" *will* be obtained, but only that there "*may* be" such help, and my opponent well knows that this is a question which members of a Secular Society are not called upon either to affirm or to deny, so long as they are willing to employ human effort to achieve human improvement, and profess their confidence in its efficacy. The act of praying is, of course, a material one; but as to any help being obtained in answer thereto, I can say nothing, not having had any personal experience of such assistance.

6. Religion is generally accepted as representing the noblest conduct of mankind. This cannot be exemplified better than in the cultivation of human nature in the path of virtue; hence to do good is the highest religion—a religion which has never lacked exponents since the dawn of civilisation. My authority for such a definition is the general consent of mankind, and the invariably beneficial result of such useful action. In seeking the cultivation of the whole of human nature, Secularism does make provision for the entire being. "There can be but one God," we are told. Then that God should be, according to Dr. Sexton's position, the God of the Bible, in whose defence my opponent has not a word to say, judging from his persistent silence as to the "holiness" and "will" of the Bible Deity, and his reliance upon generalities which any Theist could affirm. The cultivation of every part of human nature being Secularism, question two in this paragraph is superfluous. If worship includes, as my opponent alleges, "much more" than veneration, what is that "much more?" I have already said, in two previous letters, that Secularism does not object to worship (as I have defined it), providing such worship does not produce action which interferes with the rights of others and mars human happiness. Following my Latin reference, Dr. Sexton, in a master-stroke of erudition, bursts forth into *sapientum octavis*. He describes my definition of humanity as "a new definition with a vengeance." Now, this only shows, "with a vengeance," that my opponent is not clear as to what he is writing about. The definition is far from being new, as every tyro in mental science should know. Has Dr. Sexton forgotten Bishop Berkeley, David Hume, and

the late Professor Ferrier? If he had a good recollection of the schools of thinkers to which these men belong, he would not laugh with such flippancy at "suns, and comets, and clouds, and rain" being "included in humanity." John Stuart Mill, in his "Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy," writes thus in regard to the Berkleian school: "All that we can possibly know of anything is the manner in which it affects the human faculties, there is nothing else to be known, *affections of human, or of some other, minds are all that we can know to exist*" (the italics are mine). But this is new to my opponent. He styles it "a remarkable discovery," and advises that the Philological Society should be apprised of it. I do not retail news a hundred years old. My opponent is welcome to claim my "remarkable discovery," to communicate it to the Philological Society, and to incur infinite stultification for his pains.

7. The term "brotherhood of man" is not used, in its societarian application, in the sense that all mankind came from one parent, but rather as manifesting, in a general manner, that feeling of love that exists in the domestic circle, and which is, or should be, mutual between brothers. If we adopt the theological application, what can be said of the conduct of an assumed Father of all, who could purposely arrange one race to be superior to and above all others on the face of the earth? who could decree that some of his children should be born and kept as slaves to others of his children? of a Father who could love one child and hate another before either of them was born? of one who gave to millions of his children such organisations that up to the present moment they have been wholly unable to understand and to appreciate the advantages enjoyed by a favoured few? and, finally, of a Father who should so order his family arrangements that the vast majority of his children should be lost for ever?

8. Dr. Sexton may deny that the New Testament teaches persecution, but such denial will go for very little unless he condescend to explain the passages of Scripture I have quoted, and to reply to the statements made in my seventh and eighth letters.

9. *The influence of Christianity, personal and general.*—Its influence on personal character was briefly dealt with

at the conclusion of my last letter ; but instead of, at least, making an effort to reply to what was there advanced, Dr. Sexton seeks to throw dust into the eyes of his readers by penning a series of the most unjust and groundless assertions, which have nothing whatever to do with the facts there given. What has my opponent to say respecting the comparative influence of the devil and the policeman on human conduct? the civil law and the Gospel and the influence of Christianity in preventing crime? Not one of these points did Dr. Sexton even refer to. Let him tell me where is the Christian who seeks *first* the kingdom of God ; who loves not the things of the world ; who takes no thought for his life ; who neglects every opportunity of laying up treasures on earth ; who resists not evil ; who has sufficient faith in the promise of his master to drink a deadly poison ; who believes that "whosoever God has joined together no man should put asunder ;" who acts as if he thought he would have, at the last day, to give an account of every idle word he had spoken through life? Let us have no further evasion, but a direct reply to this. The fact is, that whatever orthodox Christians, like Dr. Sexton, may preach, their actions in every-day life are the very antitheses of the ethics ascribed to Christ. No wonder that Sir John Bowring and Bishop Colenso found the Christian missionary enterprise to be a failure in countries where other systems had preceded it. The general influence of Christianity upon society may be seen from the testimony of Salvian in the fifth century, when he said that the Church had become "a sink of vice," and that his fellow Christians were given to lying and cheating ; from Mosheim, when he wrote that "even true Christians" were not innocent of lying and deceiving ; from Wesley, who, after stating that "Bible-reading England" was guilty of every species of vice, even those that nature itself abhors, says : "Such a complication of villanies of every kind, considered with all their aggravations, such a scorn of whatever bears the face of virtue ; such injustice, fraud, and falsehood ; above all, such perjury, and such a method of law, we may defy the whole world to produce." As a modern writer observes : "Christianity has assisted human advancement in the same manner that a break assists the

progress of a locomotive. Its fanaticism forms a page of history unequalled in demoniac cruelty—in foul and malignant venom—in that of any other faith. Professing universal love and peace, it has gone forth like one of the dreadful genii called into being by Arabian fancy—the Bible in one hand, a dripping sword and chains in the other, while from its black lips it has hoarsely shouted, ‘Believe, or be damned!’” (*“Career of Religious Ideas,”* by Tuttle, p. 66). If we read the history of my opponent’s system, during what is known as the Dark Ages, the brightest era of Christianity, we shall find that, assisted by kingcraft, she ruled the civilised world through a thousand years, without one ray of light, without any addition whatever to the arts and sciences, and then bequeathed to mankind a heritage of cruelty, bloodshed, and persecution. Do we require instances of the legitimate effects of Christianity? They are furnished in the history of the seven crusades, which will for ever remain a lasting monument of the evil effects of the orthodox faith. For nearly 200 years did the followers of Christ lay desolate one of the finest and most romantic portions of the known world, and laid prostrate thousands of human beings. In the history of the Christian Emperor Constantine, who, with the sword in one hand and the cross in the other, pursued his slaughtering and relentless career, we witnessed the influence of Christianity. Behold the streets of Paris, when in the fifteenth century they flowed with the blood of defenceless Protestants, and when over 10,000 persons were massacred by the believers in a meek and lowly Jesus. Read the account of the valleys of Piedmont, which were the scene of a most inhuman butchery, in which women were suffocated by hundreds in confined caves by the bearers of the cross. Study the history of the Inquisition, to whose power three millions of lives were sacrificed in one century. Peruse the records of the actions of a King Henry the Eighth, a Queen Mary, and a Queen Elizabeth, in whose Christian reigns hundreds were either condemned to die at the stake, or to endure revolting cruelties in loathsome dungeons, because they differed from the prevailing religion of those times. These were the effects of Christianity, more or less, during centuries when it had its legitimate

sway, and if the same results are not manifested to-day, it is, not because the faith is altered, but rather in consequence of the growth and development of the Secular spirit of the age.

Having already occupied so much space, my remarks upon the fallacies of Dr. Sexton's summary of the two systems must be postponed till my next and last letter.



DR. SEXTON'S TWELFTH LETTER.

THIS is my final letter, and I intend it to be as brief as possible ; and I trust my opponent, who has already occupied more space than I have in the debate, will follow my example. I see very little to reply to in his last. He is repeatedly telling his readers what are the topics to be discussed—as though they were not as competent to judge of that matter as he is—and pointing out what he considers I ought to have done, clearly evincing his dissatisfaction with the course I have taken. I did not expect to please Mr. Watts, and, had I done so, I should have looked upon the fact as a proof that I had failed to make out my case. The debate as a whole will soon be before the readers ; let them be the judges as to the side on which the truth is to be found. I am, of course, taunted with omitting some topics. But what are they ? I did not discuss the sin against the Holy Ghost, nor defend certain doctrines which Mr. Watts calls “orthodox,” and which he affirms are in the New Testament, but has not told us where. I have dealt with all matters that I considered to have a bearing on the question at issue—the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost not being one.

I repeat what I have often said before, that no one can tell what Secularism is, since it has no fixed rules, and no authority to which an appeal can be made. Even on the great question of morality, about which, at least, there ought to be some sort of certainty, Mr. Bradlaugh boasts of the vague, shifting, and indefinite character of his system. He says : “There is no standard—defined, limited, fixed, walled-in morality, which can be preached to you, and this is the objection to all religions and the advantage of Secularism” (Debate with Barker, p. 42).

Glorious advantage this, the absence of a moral code ! In a previous letter I quoted one Secular authority who maintained that a man's morals were affairs of his own, and that society had no business with them. Mr. Watts has been judiciously silent on this choice extract from an article in his own paper. My opponent indulges in a great deal of vague talk about the business of Secularism being to improve man's condition on earth ; but he persistently ignores the question as to the methods by which this is proposed to be accomplished. Secularism has no plan for regenerating society, and has done nothing towards it. " Fundamental principles " it has none, as I have already demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt. It uses " material means ; " so does everybody else. But, then, it confines itself solely to these, which is not wonderful, considering that it asserts that there are no others. But, after all, it seems that a possible supernatural is included within these " material means." Mr. Holyoake does not say, we are told, that help *will* be obtained from prayer and Providence, but *may* be. Very well, that is all I contended for. Is, then, this possible help from supernatural interference on one's behalf, which Secularists are free to avail themselves of, one of the " material means " of Secularism ? But I have asked this question till I am tired of it.

The assertion, so often repeated by Mr. Watts, that Secularism " accepts only those teachings of the past that are reconcilable to reason," means anything or nothing. Whose reason ? Secularism, to the great body of intelligent men, is unreasonable, while Christianity is acknowledged by large numbers of the most profound and erudite men to be rational in the highest degree. I do not simply charge Secularism with want of originality, as Mr. Watts represents : my charge against it is that it is nothing at all but a huge negation, that it has no principles, and that it aims at nothing whatever, save the destruction of religion. Christianity, I maintain, is original, in its method at all events.

As to the decline of Secularism, let the extracts from Secular writers already given suffice to support my statement. My opponent's reference to his own books, to show the contrary, will not serve to overturn the assertions of his compeers. Suppose that these extracts did

only refer to Secular organisation, that is sufficient, for Secular organisation is Secularism. But Mr. Watts knows that they refer to the whole thing. Secularism, as a system, is at its last gasp. I do not mean that Infidelity is not prevalent, for error always exists. It changes its form often ; it passed from Socialism to Secularism, and is now undergoing another transformation, and we await the result with some interest. It was once essentially democratic, would not even tolerate a President—now it has a Marquis at its head. The British Secular Union indicates a new line of departure ; it worships rank, bows down to “our old nobility,” and manifests a predilection for the “blue blood” of the aristocracy. The noble Marquis has introduced a new feature, savouring a good deal of Newmarket—the breeding of the race—and this will probably hereafter become added to the “material means.” The Presidents of the two Societies are already waving their wands, and lo ! the transformation scenes ; next come clown and pantaloon, and then the fun commences. As for Secularism, as poor George Jacob Holyoake formulated it, that is already, to a great extent, a thing of the past.

The absurd comparison of the Congregationalists leaving the Established Church, with the principles of which they had come to disagree, with the “Union” Secularists splitting off from the “National,” with whose principles my friend says they are in perfect accord, is a fine sample of Secular reasoning.

As to the early converts, their Christianity was the same as ours—derived from the same source. Mr. Watts is evidently troubled concerning that “three thousand.” It is such a complete answer to his wild statement about the progress of Secularism being equal to that of Christianity.

Mr. Watts says that “the charge brought against Secularism, that it denies responsibility and freedom, is not true,” and that he has “admitted both.” His admissions are not sufficient, however, when they flatly contradict the sober and deliberate statements of other advocates. Let him deal with the quotations I have already given from Messrs. Bradlaugh and Holyoake. It is no reply to me to refer to another passage from Mr. Bradlaugh. I want the one I quoted dealt with. But in

what sense does Secularism recognise freedom and responsibility? Let us be informed on that score. Secularists hold most tenaciously to what was originally called Necessitarianism, or now designated Determinism. And I should like to be told how that can accord with freedom and responsibility. Mr. Holyoake, as I have shown, excludes freedom, and Mr. Bradlaugh denies responsibility.

What I said about "experience" is strictly true; and the long paragraph going round and round the subject, but not touching it, in my opponent's letter, leaves the matter as I put it. No one has had, or ever can have, any experience of the first law of motion, nor of a score of other things in the domain of science. Secularism, therefore, confining itself to "experience"—as Mr. Watts says it does—is another name for unreasoning ignorance. Mr. Thomson, the ablest writer in the Secularist body, and best known as "B. V.," says of his friends: "Infidels superabound with belief; they believe that empiricism can discover all the world's veiled mysteries, and that logic can resolve all the world's problems; they believe that human nature can be improved out of man, and that every one can lift himself some fine day higher than heaven, sitting in his own basket; they believe that many an existence depends absolutely upon man's belief in its existence; and they, above all, believe in themselves—which is the very anti-climax of credulity."

Religion, Mr. Watts says, is the cultivation of human nature, etc., and that his "authority for such a definition is the general consent of mankind." The general consent of mankind lends support to the very opposite view—viz., that religion has a reference to man's relationship to God. Such a definition as that given by my opponent is utterly incorrect. It is opposed to the etymology of the word, to its general use, and to every authority on the subject worth naming. Even the Marquis of Queensberry defined it differently, in his blundering and clumsy way, at the Secular Conference at Leicester. But in the next place, to say that Secularism enjoins the cultivation of human nature in its entirety, is not only to beg the question, but to state what is utterly untrue, for it ignores persistently the religious part of human nature. As Lowell says:—

“Wrong ever builds on quicksands, but the Right
To the firm centre lays its moveless base.”

What my opponent means by falling back on Berkeley and David Hume to support his definition of humanity, I am at a loss to conjecture. For, in the first place, he is not a Berkleyan ; or if he be, the greater part of what he has said in this discussion is blown to the winds. Secondly, neither Berkeley nor Hume, nor any other writer that I am acquainted with, uses the word “humanity” in the sense that he has defined it. Thirdly, if his definition be the true one, humanity includes everything, and his reasoning, consequently, throughout this debate, upon the subject of human nature, is utterly at fault.

A new definition of brotherhood is given also. I should like to see it made good. Where there is no common parentage, there is no brotherhood. Mr. Watts may quibble over this as much as he pleases, but he will not get rid of the fact.

On the point of the beneficial influence of Secularism upon the fallen and depraved, Mr. Watts said he could quote cases. In my last, I asked for one only. How is that very reasonable and very modest request met? Simply by a long and violent tirade against Christianity. But if all this vituperative abuse were based upon facts, which it is not, how would it affect the question? Free-thinkers of far greater standing, of certainly equal ability, and of as large an experience as Mr. Watts, have testified to the beneficial effects of Christianity upon the world, in passages which I have already quoted ; and every Church can point to instances of characters reformed by Christian teaching and the influence of the Gospel upon the heart and life. It is no answer to this to tell us that so-called Christian States and self-dubbed Christian Emperors have persecuted. We know it perfectly well. But such men were as little Christian as Mr. Watts himself ; and, in truth, it was the Secular spirit in them, not the Christian, that led to their intolerance. But, despite all these drawbacks, there are no people in the world to-day equal to Christians in civilisation, in culture, in refinement, in purity, in philanthropy, and in every good work. When there is a famine or wide-spread want in any part of the world, it is Christians who subscribe their

money and give their time to alleviate the distress. I never find the names of Secularists figuring prominently in subscription lists for charitable purposes. What do Secularists ever do in the way of benefiting mankind? What efforts do they make to elevate their fellows? They can do nothing, because they have no message to deliver. Mr. Holyoake himself has said: "I am compelled to acknowledge that the most virtuous and best-conducted young men are to be found in religious families" (*Reasoner*, vi., p. 406). Now, the reason for this is not far to seek. Secularism is powerless to influence for good, to check vice, and to reform character. I have asked before why Secular teachers do not seek to bring under the influence of their system the depraved and the vile, instead of always spending their time in denouncing religion? They never make the attempt, for they know how egregious would be the failure. Secularism is as impotent to effect any real change in character as a bag of moonshine. Secularists are, many of them, good, moral, upright men; but they were all that before they became Secularists, and it is, therefore, their Christian training that made them what they are. Christianity is a powerful spiritual lever, by which man can be raised up from the lowest depths of depravity to virtue, to holiness, to happiness, and to heaven.

In concluding this debate, I may be permitted to say that I do not despair of seeing my friend some day on the other side. Sceptics, one after another, leave their gloomy and pestilent system for the clear sunlight of Christian truth. Few pass their whole lives in unbelief; most of them return to their early faith at some time or other. So I trust will my present opponent.

As far as the debate is concerned, I have finished. I would only just remark that, if I have used any uncharitable expression, it has been inadvertently, and I am sorry for it. On both sides I trust the public will say that we have treated each other as gentlemen. There has been no talk of "thrashing" one another—an expression which I often come across in Secularistic journals, and one notable instance of which, written only last week, I have now before me. Men who meet in debate to "thrash" each other have mistaken their vocation. Their place is in a prize ring, where we should

probably meet them if they had sufficient courage. My present opponent is, however, not one of this class of debaters. He may have used strong expressions, as I have too ; but they have never been personal. I have for him—and, indeed, for many other Secularists—a most sincere esteem, and I trust I shall never have less. His system I shall wage an unflinching war against as long as God spares me ; but I shall always distinguish between the opinions and the men by whom they are held. “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three ; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Cor. xiii. 13). I will only add the following words of Seneca, which show that, in the opinion of that ancient heathen philosopher, no Secularistic code of morals is possible : “ *Virtus non advenit a natura, neque a doctrina, sed a numine divino.*”

MR. WATTS'S TWELFTH LETTER.

IN this my last letter I will endeavour so far to please my opponent as to comply with his wish that it should be as brief as possible. This, indeed, will not be difficult, as the positions laid down and the questions asked in my last letter remain altogether unanswered. Dr. Sexton is reminded that it is not simply the sin against the Holy Ghost that he has refused to notice: he has made no attempt to deal with my allegations as to the incompatibility of certain New Testament teachings with the Secular duties of life, as cited in my second letter, with the Bible account of the holiness of God, the brotherhood of man, and the fatherhood of God, as mentioned in my ninth and tenth letters. He has also been markedly silent with respect to my objections to belief in Christ, to the Christian scheme of salvation, and to the New Testament teachings of a future life. Nothing has been said by Dr. Sexton as to a personal Devil, a place called hell, or to the contradictory nature of the "will of God" as the foundation of morality. Surely these were points deserving, from my opponent's position, consideration upon his part. Why he has so persistently passed them over in silence, although his attention has been frequently drawn to them, the readers must judge for themselves.

Dr. Sexton's repeated assertion that Secularism has no authority, etc., avails but little in the face of the proof I have given to the contrary. In his last letter he utilises a quotation from the Barker Debate, and exclaims, "Glorious advantage this, the absence of a moral code"! Now, the extract given in no way speaks of the "absence of a moral code," but only asserts that we cannot have a standard, limited and fixed for all ages, by which we are to

regulate human actions. The general principle, "that the welfare of the people is the supreme law," can be accepted as permanent; but what will contribute to that welfare depends on circumstances which are modified with changing time and by the mutations and new necessities of nations. Finally, in this debate, I repeat that although members of the Secular body differ upon minor matters, and necessarily so, there is perfect concord upon all that are regarded as essentials. This statement has not been disproved, or even openly confronted, in the course of this discussion.

Whose reason do we accept as an authority? asks my opponent. I answer, the reason of man, guided by general experience and unfettered by all those creeds and dogmas which profess to have an infallible book for their sanction. We do not allege that, as yet, reason is a perfect guide, but we do assert that it is superior to any other of which we are cognisant.

Dr. Sexton affirms that "Secular organisation is Secularism." This is true, in the sense that Christian organisation is Christianity, but it is also true that Secularism can and does exist apart from a corporate organisation. Secularism must obtain certain prevalence and win adherents before it can be organised. According to the Doctor's reasoning, the only Christianity of the Middle Ages was the Christian organisation of that period; and what that was has been amply shown in this debate.

If my comparison of the Congregationists leaving the Established Church with the origin of the second Secular Organisation in this country was "absurd," why did not my opponent prove it? To make statements without adducing evidence on their behalf "is a fine sample" of Christian "reasoning;" but it can hardly conduce towards strengthening my opponent's general position.

Dr. Sexton need not suppose that the "three thousand converts" trouble me. I am little concerned about myths of any kind, and least of all with the one in question. It would be interesting to know—if Christianity is the New Testament, as my opponent alleges—how those "converts" could have derived their faith therefrom, considering that the New Testament did not exist at the period of the alleged "conversion." I cannot here open new ground for discussion, but I would request

the reader to remember that the mere mention of thousands of converts by the New Testament cannot be regarded as historical evidence.

With respect to responsibility and freedom : in my fourth, seventh, and last letters I have shown that Secularism recognises responsibility ; and, moreover, it has there been shown what we, as Secularists, understand by the word responsibility. As to freedom, while admitting that we regard it as necessary to morality, I have pressed for a definition of the term from my opponent's standpoint, and have demonstrated how opposed freedom is to the Christian doctrine of predestination. Upon this point my opponent has been "judiciously silent," as he has also been upon his confounding manifestations of matter with matter itself.

In evading what I said upon the experiential question, Dr. Sexton has not told us how he can have any knowledge of anything without experience. It is quite true that Secularists do "believe" a variety of things ; but their belief is based upon reasonable evidence, which is not the case with my opponent's belief, judging from his reluctance during this discussion to furnish that evidence when it has been demanded of him.

My definition, that religion consists in the cultivation of human nature in the path of virtue, is practically endorsed by every moral section of society to-day, and is acknowledged even in portions of the New Testament itself.

The question is not whether or not I am a Berkleyan, but whether my explanation of humanity was, as my opponent stated, a new one. I have shown that it was not.

If Dr. Sexton objects to the modern application of the term, "brotherhood of man," and adheres to the theological sense of the phrase, why did he not deal with the objection urged in my last letter to the Christian usage of the term, based upon the Biblical doctrine of the "fatherhood of God"? Here he maintained an ominous silence, as he did also upon my further reference to the New Testament encouragement of persecution.

Upon the influence of Christianity, I put important questions in my last two letters, to which I have received no reply. The reader is requested to notice the paragraph under this head, marked No. 9, in my last letter. It only remains for me now to notice Dr. Sexton's contrast

of the two systems in the concluding part of his eleventh letter.

Throughout the eight paragraphs there is no new point introduced, while the misrepresentations are exceedingly numerous. For instance, Secularism does not say that there is no God, or that there is no future life, neither does it deny "all responsibility." On the other hand, in opposition to my opponent's assertion, it has been clearly shown throughout this debate that Secularism has a standard of progress, a moral guide, and that it possesses means of subjugating evil passions and wrong desires. Its principles and moral code are given in my second letter; and its superiority is indicated in my first and third letters.

In concluding this debate, I wish it to be understood that my principal object in entering upon it was to place the merits of the two systems before our readers, leaving them to decide for themselves which they deem the better and more worthy of acceptance. There is, perhaps, some hope yet of my opponent seeing the error of his present ways, and avowing his return to the truth as it is mirrored in Secular philosophy. Certain it is that believers of the intellectual ability of Dr. Sexton are, one after another, relinquishing their "gloomy and foggy" faiths for the "clear sunlight" of reason and truth.

I heartily reciprocate the kind expression of feeling contained in Dr. Sexton's last paragraph but one, and I trust that all future debates may be as free as the present has been from personalities and individual imputations. While I respect every honest Christian, I deem it my duty on all proper occasions to expose what I consider to be his fallacies, and to condemn what appears to me his errors.

This is now my twentieth set debate, in which I have discussed with fifteen opponents, among whom have been Drs. Harrison and Smith, the Revs. A. Stewart, T. D. Matthias, Brewin Grant, and W. Adamson, and Mr. B. H. Cowper. In all those controversies my object has been to show that integrity of conduct, honesty of conviction, sincerity of profession, and cultivated intelligence are superior to theological faiths, and are also sufficient for this life and for any other that may hereafter be revealed.

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